THE YOUNG MAROONERS ON THE FLORIDA COAST

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"Hallo!" cried Harold, his own voice husky with emotion . . . Frontispiece

THE YOUNG MAROONERS ON THE FLORIDA COAST

BY

F. R. GOULDING

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS
(Uncle Remus)

ILLUSTRATED

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INTRODUCTION

I have been asked to furnish an introduction for a new edition of "The Young Marooners." As an introduction is unnecessary, the writing of it must be to some extent perfunctory. The book is known in many lands and languages. It has survived its own success, and has entered into literature. It has become a classic. The young marooners themselves have reached middle age, and some of them have passed away, but their adventures are as fresh and as entertaining as ever.

Dr. Goulding's work possesses all the elements of enduring popularity. It has the strength and vigour of simplicity; its narrative flows continuously forward; its incidents are strange and thrilling, and underneath all is a moral purpose sanely put.

The author himself was surprised at the great popularity of his story, and has written a history of its origin as a preface. The internal evidence is that the book is not the result of literary ambition, but of a strong desire to instruct and amuse his own children, and the story is so deftly written that the instruction is a definite part of the narrative. The art here may be unconscious, but it is a very fine art nevertheless.

Dr. Goulding lived a busy life. He had the restless missionary spirit which he inherited from the Puritans of Dorchester, England, who established themselves in Dorchester, South Carolina, and in Dorchester, Georgia, before the Revolutionary War. Devoting his life to good works, he nevertheless found time to indulge his literary faculty; he also found time to indulge his taste for mechanical invention. He invented the first sewing-machine that was ever put in practical use in the South. His family were using this machine a year before the Howe patents were issued. In his journal of that date (1845) he writes: "Having satisfied myself about my machine, I laid it aside that I might attend to other and weightier duties." He applied for no patent.

"The Young Marooners" was begun in 1847, continued in a desultory way, and completed in 1850. Its first title was a quaint one, "Bobbins and Cruisers Company." It was afterward called "Robert and Harold; or, the Young Marooners." The history of the manuscript of the book is an interesting parallel to that of many other successful books. After having been positively declined in New York, it was for months left in Philadelphia, where one night, as the gentleman whose duty it was to pass judgment upon the material offered had begun in a listless way his task, he became so much absorbed in the story that he did not lay it down until long after midnight, and hastening to the publishers early next morning, insisted that it should be immediately put into print. Three editions were issued in the first

year, and it was soon reprinted in England by Nisbet & Co., of London, followed by five other houses in England and Scotland at later dates.

Dr. Goulding was the author of "Little Josephine," published in Philadelphia (1848); "The Young Marooners" (1852); "Confederate Soldiers' Hymn-Book," a compilation (1863); "Marooner's Island," an independent sequel to "Young Marooners" (1868); "Frank Gordon; or, When I was Little Boy" (1869), and "The Woodruff Stories" (1870). With the exception of "Little Josephine" and the "Hymn-Book," they have all been republished abroad. Born near Midway, Liberty County, Georgia, September 28th, 1810, he died August 21st, 1881, and is buried in the little churchyard at Roswell, Georgia.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS.

THE HISTORY OF THIS BOOK

In a vine-covered piazza of the sunny South, a company of boys and girls used to gather round me, of a summer evening, to hear the varied story of my early years. As these boys and girls grew larger, I found it necessary to change my plan of instruction. There were many *facts in nature* which I wished to communicate, and many *expedients* in practical life, which I supposed might be useful. To give this information, in such shape as to insure its being remembered, required a story. The result has been a book; and that book is "The Young Marooners"--or, as my young folks call it, "Robert and Harold."

Their interest in the story has steadily increased from the beginning to the end; and sure am I, that if it excites one-half as much abroad, as it has excited at home, no author need ask for more.

The story, however, is not all a story; the fiction consists mostly in the putting together. With very few exceptions, the incidents are real occurrences; and whoever will visit the regions described, will see that the pictures correspond to nature. Possibly also, the visitor may meet even now, with a fearless Harold, an intelligent Robert, a womanly Mary, and a merry Frank.

Should my young readers ever go *marooning*, I trust their party may meet with fewer misfortunes and as happy a termination.

F. R. G.

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"Hallo!" cried Harold, his own voice husky with emotion . . . *Frontispiece*

The company went together to the sea shore and planted the signal

Deliberately taking aim, he discharged the whole load of bullets between the creature's eyes

They were not two hours in reaching the proposed landing place

THE YOUNG MAROONERS

CHAPTER I

THE COMPANY AND THEIR EMBARKATION

On Saturday, the 21st of August, 1830, a small but beautiful brig left the harbour of Charleston, South Carolina, bound for Tampa Bay, Florida. On board were nine passengers; Dr. Gordon, his three children, Robert, Mary, and Frank; his sister's son, Harold McIntosh, and four servants.

Dr. Gordon was a wealthy physician, who resided, during the winter, upon the seaboard of Georgia, and during the summer upon a farm in the mountains of that beautifully varied and thriving State. His wife was a Carolinian, from the neighbourhood of Charleston. Anna Gordon, his sister, married a Col. McIntosh, who, after residing for twelve years upon a plantation near the city of Montgomery, in Alabama, died, leaving his widow with three children, and an encumbered estate. Soon after her widowhood, Dr. Gordon paid her a visit, for the two-fold purpose of condolence and of aiding in the settlement of her affairs. She was so greatly pleased with the gentlemanly bearing and the decided intelligence of Robert, who on this occasion accompanied his father, that she requested the privilege of placing her son Harold under her brother's care, until some other arrangement could be made for his education. Dr. Gordon was equally prepossessed with the frank manners and manly aspect of his nephew, and it was with peculiar pleasure that he acceded to the request. Harold had been with his uncle about a month previous to the period at which this history begins.

Mrs. Gordon was a woman of warm affections and cultivated mind, but of feeble constitution. She had been the mother of five children; but, during the infancy of the last, her health exhibited so many signs of decay as to convince her husband that the only hope of saving her life was to seek for her, during the ensuing winter, a climate even more bland than that in which she had spent her girlhood.

Tampa Bay is a military post of the United States. Dr. Gordon had formerly visited it, and was so delighted with its soft Italian climate, and with the wild beauty of its shores, that he had even then purchased a choice lot in the vicinity of the fort, and ever after had looked forward, almost with hope, to the time when he might have some excuse for removing there. That time had now come. And doubting not that the restorative powers of the climate would exert a happy influence upon his wife's health, he left her with her relatives, while he went to Tampa for the purpose of preparing a dwelling suitable for her reception.

The accompanying party was larger than he had at first intended. Robert and Harold were to go of course; they were old enough to be his companions; and, moreover, Harold had been sent by his mother for the express purpose of enjoying that excellent *home education* which had been so happily exhibited in Robert. But on mature reflection there appeared to Dr. Gordon special reasons why he should also take his eldest daughter, Mary, who was about eleven years of age, and his second son, Frank, who was between seven and eight. The addition

of these younger persons to the party, however, did not cause him any anxiety, or any addition to the number of his servants; for he and his wife, although wealthy by inheritance, and accustomed all their lives to the help of servants, had educated their children to be as independent as possible of unnecessary help. Indeed, Mary was qualified to be of great assistance; for though only eleven years of age, she was an excellent housekeeper, and during the indisposition of her mother had presided with remarkable ability at her father's table. Little Frank was too young to be useful, but he was an obedient, merry little fellow, a great pet with everybody, and promised, by his cheerful good nature, to add much to the enjoyment of the party; and as to the care which he needed, Mary had only to continue that motherly attention which she had been accustomed already to bestow.

To say a word or two more of the youths; Robert Gordon, now nearly fourteen years of age, had a great thirst for knowledge. Stimulated continually by the instructive conversation of his father, who spared no pains in his education, he drew rapidly from all the sources opened to him by books, society, and nature. His finely developed mind was decidedly of a philosophic cast. Partaking, however, of the delicate constitution of his mother, he was oftentimes averse to those athletic exercises which became his age, and by which he would have been fitted for a more vigorous and useful manhood.

Harold McIntosh, a half year older than his cousin, was, on the contrary, of a robust constitution and active habit, with but little inclination for books. Through the inattention of a father, who seemed to care more for manly daring than for intellectual culture, his education had been sadly neglected. The advantages afforded him had been of an exceedingly irregular character, and his only incentive to study had been the gratification of his mother, whom he tenderly loved. For years preceding the change of his abode, a large portion of his leisure time had been spent in visiting an old Indian of the neighbourhood, by the name of Torgah, and gleaning from him by conversation and practice, that knowledge of woodcraft, which nothing but an Indian's experience can furnish, and which usually possesses so romantic a charm for Southern and Western (perhaps we may say for American) boys.

The cousins had become very much attached. Each admired the other's excellencies, and envied the other's accomplishments; and the parents had good reason to hope that they would prove of decided benefit to each other by mutual example.

Preparing for a winter's residence at such a place as Tampa, where, with the exception of what was to be obtained at the fort, they would be far removed from all the comforts and appliances of civilized life, Dr. Gordon was careful to take with him everything which could be foreseen as needful. Among these may be mentioned the materials already framed for a small dwelling-house, kitchen, and

stable; ample stores of provisions, poultry, goats (as being more convenient than cows), a pair of horses, a buggy, and wagon, a large and beautiful pleasure boat, books for reading, and for study, together with such furniture as habit had made necessary to comfort.

CHAPTER II

MOTHER CARY'S CHICKENS--FISHING FOR TROUT--SAW-FISH--FRANK AND THE SHARK---LOOMING---TOM STARBOARD--THE NAUTILUS--ARRIVAL AT TAMPA

Mary and Frank were affected with sea sickness shortly after entering the rough and rolling water on the bar, and having, in consequence, retired early to bed, they scarcely rose for six and thirty hours. Indeed, all the passengers, except Harold, suffered in turn this usual inconvenience of persons unaccustomed to the sea.

The only incident of interest that occurred during this part of the voyage, was a fright received by Mary and Frank. It was as follows: Having partially recovered from their indisposition, they were engaged with childish glee in fishing from the stern windows. Directly over head hung the jolly boat, and beneath them the water foamed and eddied round the rudder. Mary was fishing for Mother Cary's chickens--a species of "poultry" well known to those who go to sea. Her apparatus consisted of a strong thread, twenty or thirty yards long, having divers loops upon it, and baited at the end with a little tuft of red. She had not succeeded in taking any; but one, more daring than the rest, had become entangled in the thread, and Mary eagerly drew it towards her, exclaiming, "I have caught it! I have caught it!" Ere, however, she could bring it within arm's length, the struggling bird had escaped.

Frank had obtained a large fish-hook, which he tied to a piece of twine, and baited with some raw beef; and he was fishing, he said, for *trout.* A few minutes after Mary's adventure with the bird, he saw a great fish, twice as long as himself, having an enormous snout, set on both sides with a multitude of sharp teeth, following in the vessel's wake. He drew himself quickly into the window, exclaiming, "Look, sister, look!" The fish did not continue long to follow them. It seemed to have come on a voyage of curiosity, and having satisfied itself that this great swimming monster, the vessel, was neither whale nor kraken, it darted off

and returned no more.

"I should not like to hook *that* fellow," said Frank, "for I am sure I could not draw him in."

"No," replied Mary, "and I should not like to have such an ugly fellow on board, if we could get him here."

"Ugh! what a long ugly nose he has," said Frank. "I wonder what he can do with such a nose, and with all those teeth on the outside of it--only see, sister, *teeth on his* NOSE!"

"I do not know," she answered, "but we can ask father when we go on deck."

"I think his nose must be long to smell things a great way off," conjectured Frank.

Thus they chatted until Mary called out, "See, Frank, there is a black piece of wood sticking out of the water. See how it floats after us! No, it cannot be a piece of wood, for it swims from side to side. It must be a fish. It is! Draw in your head, Frank."

Unsuccessful in his trout fishing, Frank had attached a red silk handkerchief to his line, and was amusing himself with letting it down so as to touch along the water. When Mary said "it is a fish," he espied an enormous creature, much larger than the sawfish, swimming almost under him, and looking up hungrily to the window where they were. A moment after it leaped directly towards them. Both screamed with terror, and Frank's wrist was jerked so violently, and pained him so much, that he was certain his hand had been bitten off. He was about to scream again; but looking down, he found his hand was safe, and the next moment saw the fish swimming away with the end of the handkerchief hanging from its mouth. The fish was a shark. It had been attracted probably by the smell of Frank's bait, and by the sight of the red silk. When he drew his handkerchief from the water, the fish leaped after it, and jerked the twine which had been wrapped around his wrist. From that time they ceased all fishing from the cabin windows.

The history of that fishing, however, was not yet ended. On the day following the company were much interested in watching a singular phenomenon, which is sometimes visible at sea, though seldom in a latitude so low as Florida. The looming of the land had been remarkably distinct and beautiful; at one time the land looked as if lifted far above the water; at another the shore was seen doubled, as if the water were a perfect reflector, and the land and its shadow were united at the base. But, on the present occasion, the shadow appeared in the wrong place--united to its substance, not at the base, but at the top. It was a most singular spectacle to behold trees growing topsy-turvy, from land in the sky.

The sailors, as well as passengers, looked on with a curiosity not unmixed with awe, and an old "salt" was heard to mutter, as he ominously shook his head,

"I never seed the likes of that but something was sure to come after. Yes," he

continued, looking sullenly at Mary and Frank, "and yesterday, when I was at the starn, I saw a chicken flutter in a string."

"A chicken, Tom?" inquired the captain, looking at the little culprits. "Ah, have any of my young friends been troubling the sailor's pets?"

"No, sir," responded Frank, promptly and indignantly. "We did not trouble anybody's chickens. I only went to the coop, and pulled the old drake's tail; but I did that to make him look at the bread I brought him."

"I do not mean the chickens on board, but the chickens that fly around us--Mother Cary's chickens," said the captain, trying hard to smother down a laugh. "Don't you know that they all belong to the sailors; and that whoever troubles them is sure to bring trouble on the ship?"

"No, sir," Frank persisted, evidently convinced that the captain was trying to tease him. "I did not know that they belonged to anybody. I thought that they were all wild."

Mary, however, looked guilty. She knew well the sailor's superstition about the "chickens," but having had at that time nothing to do, she had been urged on by an irrepressible desire for fun, and until this moment had imagined that her fishing was unnoticed. She timidly answered,

"I did not *catch* it, sir; I only tangled it in the thread, and it got away before I touched it."

"Well, Tom," said the captain to the sailor, who seemed to be in doubt after Frank's defence whether to appear pleased or angry, "I think you will have to forgive the offence this time, especially as the sharks took it in hand so soon to revenge the insult, and ran away with the little fellow's handkerchief."

Old Tom smiled grimly at the allusion to the shark; for he had been sitting quietly in the jolly boat picking rope, and had witnessed the whole adventure.

The wind, which had continued favourable ever since they left Charleston, now gradually died away. The boatswain whistled often and shrilly to bring it back; but it was like "calling spirits from the vasty deep." The sails hung listlessly down, and moved only as the vessel rocked sluggishly upon the scarce undulating surface. The only circumstance which enlivened this scene was the appearance of a nautilus, or Portuguese man-of-war. Mary was the first to discern it. She fancied that it was a tiny toy boat, launched by some child on shore, and wafted by the wind to this distant point. It was certainly a toy vessel, though one of nature's workmanship; for there was the floating body corresponding to the hull, there the living passenger, there the sails spread or furled at will, and there the oars (Mary could see them move) by which the little adventurer paddled itself along.

The young people were very anxious to obtain it. Frank went first to old Tom Starboard (as the sailor was called who had scolded him and Mary, but who was now on excellent terms with both) to ask whether they might have the nautilus if

they could catch it.

"Have the man-o'-war!" ejaculated the old man, opening wide his eyes, "who ever heered of sich a thing? O yes, have it, if you can get it; but how will you do that?"

"Brother Robert and cousin Harold will row after it and pick it up, if the captain will let them have his boat."

Tom chuckled at the idea, and said he doubted not the captain would let them have his boat, and be glad, too, to see the fun. Frank then went to the captain, and told him that old Tom had given him leave to have the man-of-war if he could get it; and that his brother and cousin would go out and pick it up, if the captain would let them have his boat. With a good-natured smile, he answered,

"You are perfectly welcome to the boat, my little man; but if your brother and cousin catch that little sailor out there, they will be much smarter than most folks."

"Can they not pick it up?"

"Easily enough, if it will wait till they come. But if they do not wish to be hurt, they had better take a basket or net for dipping it from the water."

Frank went finally to his father to obtain his consent, which after a moment's hesitation was granted, the doctor well knowing what the probable result would be, yet pleased to afford them any innocent amusement by which to enliven their voyage.

"Tom," said the captain, "lower away the jolly boat, and do you go with these young gentlemen. Row softly as you can, and give them the best chance for getting what they want."

The boat was soon alongside. Old Tom slid down by a rope, but Robert and Harold were let down more securely. They shoved off from the vessel's side, and glided so noiselessly along, that the water was scarcely rippled. Harold stood in the bow, and Robert amidships, one with a basket, and the other with a scoop net, ready to dip it from the water. A cat creeping upon a shy bird could not have been more stealthy in its approach. But somehow the little sensitive thing became aware of its danger, and ere the boat's prow had come within ten feet, it quickly drew in its many arms, and sank like lead beyond their sight.

"Umph!" said old Tom, with an expressive grunt, "I said you might have it, if you could catch it."

On the first day of September the voyagers approached some placid looking islands, tasselled above with lofty palmettoes, and varied beneath with every hue of green, from the soft colour of the mallow to the sombre tint of the cedar and the glossy green of the live oak. Between these islands the vessel passed, so near to one that they could see a herd of deer peeping at them through the thin growth of the bluff, and a flock of wild turkeys flying to a distant grove.

Beyond the islands lay, in perfect repose, the waters of that bay whose tranquil beauty has been a theme of admiration with every one whose privilege it has been to look upon it.

CHAPTER III

TAMPA BAY--BELLEVUE--UNLADING--A DANGEROUS CUT--HOW TO STOP A BLEEDING ARTERY--TOM STARBOARD AGAIN

Tampa Bay is a perfect gem of its kind. Running eastward from the gulf for twelve or fifteen miles, then turning suddenly to the North, it is so far sheltered from within, that, except in case of severe westerly gales, its waters are ever quiet and clear as crystal. Its beach is composed of sand and broken shells of such snowy whiteness as almost to dazzle the eye, and it slopes so gradually from the land, that, in many places, a child may wade for a great distance without danger. To those who bathe in its limpid waters it is a matter of curiosity to see below, the slow crawling of the conch, while the nimble crab scampers off in haste, and fish and prawn dart wantonly around. When the tide is down there is no turnpike in the world better fitted for a pleasure ride than that smooth hard beach, from which no dust can rise, and which is of course as level as a floor.

The spot on which Dr. Gordon proposed to build, was one commanding a view both of the distant fort and of the open sea, or rather of the green islands which guarded the mouth of the bay. It already contained a small house, with two rooms, erected by a white adventurer, and afterwards sold to an Indian chief of the better class. Dr. Gordon had been originally attracted by the picturesque beauty of its location, and, on closer inspection, still more interested by seeing on each side of the chief's door a large bell pepper, that, having grown for years untouched by frost, had attained the height of eight or ten feet, and was covered all the year round with magnificent bells of green and crimson. The old chief was dead, and the premises had been vacated for more than a year.

Early in the afternoon the brig anchored opposite this spot, to which Dr. Gordon had given the name of Bellevue. All hands were called to assist the ship carpenter and Sam (Dr. Gordon's negro carpenter), to build a pier head, or wharf, extending from the shore to the vessel; this occupied them till nightfall, and the

work of unlading continued through a great part of the night, and past the middle of the next day.

The work was somewhat delayed by an untoward accident befalling one of the sailors, and threatening for a time to take his life. Peter, the brother of Sam, was standing on the gangway, with his ax on his shoulder, just as two of the sailors were coming out with a heavy box. Hearing behind him the noise of their trampling, he turned quickly around to see what it was, at the moment when the sailor, who was walking backwards, turned his head to see that the gangway was clear. By these two motions, quickly made, the head was brought towards the ax, and the ax towards the head, and the consequence was that the sailor's temple received a terrible gash. The blood gushed out in successive jets, proving that the cut vessel was an artery. Setting down the box with all speed, the assisting sailor seized the skin of the wounded temple and tried with both hands to bring the gaping lips together, so as to stop the bleeding. His effort was in vain. The blood gushed through his fingers, and ran down to his elbows. By this time the captain reached the spot, and seeing that an artery was cut, directed the sailor to press with his finger on the *heart* side of the wound. In a moment the jets ceased; for the arterial blood is driven by the heart towards the extremities, and therefore moves by jets as the heart beats, while the *venous*, or black blood, is on its way *from the extremities* to the heart; consequently, the pressure, which stops the flow from a wound in either vein or artery, must correspond to the direction in which the blood is flowing. [*See note p.* 16.]

While the sailor was thus stopping the blood by the pressure of his finger on the side from which the current came, the captain hastily prepared a ball of soft oakum, about the size of a small apple. This he laid upon the wound, and bound tightly to the head by means of a handkerchief. It is probable the flow might have been staunched had the compress been sufficiently tight, but for some reason the blood forced itself through all the impediments, saturated the tarred oakum, and trickled down the sailor's face. During this scene Dr. Gordon was at his house on the bluff. Hearing through a runner, dispatched by the captain, that a man was bleeding to death, he pointed to a quantity of cobwebs that hung in large festoons from the unceiled roof, and directed him to bring a handful of these to the vessel, remarking, that "*nothing stopped blood more quickly than cobwebs.*"

The sailor was by this time looking pale and ready to faint. Dr. Gordon inquired of the captain what had been done, pronounced it all right, and declared that he should probably have tried the same plan, but further remarked,

"This artery in the temple is oftentimes exceedingly difficult to manage by pressure. You may stop for a time the bleeding of *any* artery by pressing with sufficient force upon the right place; or, if necessary to adopt so summary a mode, you may obliterate it altogether by *burning with a hot iron.* But in the present case

I will show you an easier plan."

While speaking he had removed the bandages, and taken out his lancet; and, to the captain's amazement, in uttering the last words, he cut the bleeding artery in two, saying, "Now bring me some cold water."

The captain was almost disposed to stay the doctor's arm, supposing that he was about to make a fatal mistake; but when he saw the jets of blood instantly diminish, he exclaimed, "What new wonder is this! Here I have been trying for half an hour to staunch the blood by *closing* the wound, while you have done it in a moment, by making the wound greater."

"It is one of the secrets of the art," responded the doctor, "but a secret which I will explain by the fact, that *severed* arteries always contract and close more or less perfectly; whereas, if they should be only *split* or *partly cut*, the same contraction will keep the orifice open and bleeding. I advise you never to try it, except when you know the artery to be small, or when every other expedient has failed. But here comes the bucket. See what a fine styptic cold water is."

He washed the wound till it was thoroughly cooled; after which he brought its lips together by a few stitches made with a bent needle, and putting on the cobwebs and bandage, pronounced the operation complete.

"Live and larn!" muttered old Tom Starboard, as he turned away from this scene of surgery. "I knew it took a smart man to manage a ship; but I'll be hanged if there a'n't smart people in this world besides sailors."

The main arteries in a man's limbs are *deeply buried and lie in the same general direction with the inner seams of his coat sleeves and of his pantaloons.* When one of them is cut--which may be known by the light red blood flowing in jets, as above described--all the bandages in the world will be insufficient to staunch it, except imperfectly, and for a time, it must be tied or cauterized. If any one knows the position of the wounded artery, the best bandage for effecting a temporary stoppage of the blood, is the *tourniquet*, which is made to press like a big strong finger directly upon it on the side from which the blood is flowing. A good substitute for the tourniquet may be extemporized out of a handkerchief or other strong bandage, and a piece of corn-cob two inches long, or a suitable piece of wood or stone. This last is to be placed so as to press directly over the artery; and the bandage to be made very tight by means of a stick run through it so as to twist it up with great power.

CHAPTER IV

CONFUSION--HOUSEKEEPING IN A HURRY--FIRST NIGHT ON SHORE--COMPANY TO DINNER--"BLUE EYED MARY"--ROBERT AT PRAYER-MEETING--DANGER OF DESCENDING AN OLD WELL--RECOVERING A KNIFE DROPPED IN A WELL

It is scarcely possible, for one who has not tried it, to conceive the utter confusion which ensues on removing, in a hurry, one's goods and chattels to a place too small for their accommodation. Oh! the wilderness of boxes, baskets, bundles, heaped in disorder everywhere! and the perfect bewilderment into which one is thrown, when attempting the simplest act of household duty.

"Judy," said Mary to the cook, the evening that they landed, and while the servants were hurrying to bring under shelter the packages which Dr. Gordon was unwilling to leave exposed to the night air, "Judy, the sun is only about an hour high. Make haste and get some tea ready for supper. Father says you need not *cook* anything, we can get along on cheese and crackers."

Well, surely, it sounded like a trifle to order only a little tea. Mary thought so, and so did Judy,--it could be got ready in a minute. But just at that moment of unreadiness, there were some difficulties in the way which neither cook nor housekeeper anticipated. To have tea for supper ordinarily requires that one should have fire and water, and a tea kettle and a tea pot, and the tea itself, and cups and saucers and spoons, and sugar and milk, and a sugar pot and milk pot, besides a number of other things. But how these things are to be brought together, in their proper relation, and in a hurry, when they are all thrown promiscuously in a heap, is a question more easily asked than answered.

The simple order to prepare a little tea threw poor Judy into a fluster. "Yes, misses," she mechanically replied, "but wey I gwine fin' de tea?"

Mary was about to say, "In the sideboard of course," knowing that at home it was always kept there, when suddenly she recollected that the present sideboard was a new one, packed with table and bed clothes, and moreover that it was nailed up fast in a long box. Then, where was the tea? O, now she recalled the fact that the tea for immediate use was corked up in a tin can and stowed away together with the teapot and cups, saucers, spoons and other concomitants, in a certain green box. But where was the green box? She and Judy peered among the confused piles, and at last spied it under another box, on which was a large basket that was covered with a pile of bedding.

Judy obtained the tea and tea-pot and kettle, but until that moment had neglected to order a fire; so she went to the front door to look for her husband.

"Peter!" she called. Peter was nowhere about the house. She saw him below the bluff on his way to the landing. So, running a little nearer, and raising her voice to a high musical pitch, she sung out, "Petah-h! OH-H! Petah! Oh! PEE-

tah!"

Peter came, and learning what was wanted, went to the landing for his ax, and having brought her a stick of green oak wood on his shoulder, sallied out once more to find some kindling.

While he was on this business, Judy prepared to get some water. "Wey my bucket?" she inquired, looking around. "Who tek my bucket? I sho' somebody moob um; fuh I put um right down yuh, under my new calabash."[#]

[#] "Where is my bucket? Who has taken my bucket? I am sure somebody has moved it, for I put it right down here under my new gourd."

But nobody had disturbed it. Judy had set it, half full of water, on the ground outside the door, in the snuggest place she could find; but a thirsty goat had found it, and another thirsty goat had fought for it, and between the two, it had been upset, and rolled into a corner where it lay concealed by a bundle. By the time Judy got another supply of water ready it was growing dark. Peter had not made the fire because he was not certain where she preferred to have it built; so he waited, like a good, obedient husband, until she should direct him.

In the meantime, Mary was in trouble too. Where was the loaf sugar to be placed in cracking it, and what should she use for a hammer? Then the candle box must be opened, and candles and candle-sticks brought together, and some place contrived for placing them after they were lighted.

But perseverance conquers all things. Tea *was* made, sugar *was* cracked, and candles were both lighted and put in position. Bed-time came soon after, and weary enough with their labour, they all laid down to enjoy their first sleep at Bellevue. Mary and Frank occupied a pallet spread behind a pile of boxes in one room, while their father and the older boys lay upon cloaks, and whatever else they could convert into a temporary mattress, in the other; and the servants tumbled themselves upon a pile of their own clothing, which they had thrown under a shelter erected beside the house.

Early the next morning, two convenient shelters were hastily constructed, and the two rooms of the house were so far relieved of their confused contents, as to allow space for sitting, and almost for walking about. But ere this was half accomplished, Mary, whose sense of order and propriety was very keen, was destined to be thrown into quite an embarrassing situation.

Major Burke, the commandant of Fort Brooke, was a cousin of Mrs. Gordon, and an old college friend of the Doctor, and hearing by the captain of the brig of the arrival of the new comers, he rode over in the forenoon of the next day

to see them. Mary's mind associated so indissolubly the idea of *company*, with the stately etiquette of Charleston and Savannah, that the sight of a well-dressed stranger approaching their door, threw her almost into a fever.

"Oh! father," she cried, as soon as she could beckon him out of the back door, "what shall we do?"

"Do?" he answered, laughing. "Why, nothing at all. What can we do?"

"But is he not going to dine with us?" enquired she.

"I presume so," he replied. "I am sure I shall ask him; but what of that?"

"What, father, dine with us?" she remonstrated, "when our only table unboxed is no bigger than a light stand, and we have scarcely room for that!"

"Yes," he said, "we will do the best we can for him now, and hope to do better some other time. Perhaps you will feel less disturbed when you realize that he is your cousin and a soldier. Come, let me make you acquainted with him."

Mary was naturally a neat girl, and although her hands were soiled with labour, she was soon ready to obey her father's invitation. Slipping into the back room, by a low window, she washed her hands and face, and brushed into order the ringlets that clustered around her usually sunny face, and then came modestly into the apartment where the two gentlemen were sitting.

"John, this is my eldest daughter, Mary," said the Doctor, as she approached; "and Mary this is your cousin, Major Burke, of whom you have heard your mother and me so often speak."

The two cousins shook hands very cordially, and appeared to be mutually pleased.

"She is my housekeeper for the present," her father continued, "and has been in some trouble" (here Mary looked reproachfully at him), "that she could not give you a more fitting reception."

"Ah, indeed," said the Major, with a merry twinkle of his eye, "I suspect that when my little cousin learns how often we soldiers are glad to sit on the bare ground, and to feed, Indian fashion, on Indian fare, she will feel little trouble about giving us entertainment."

Mary's embarrassment was now wholly dispelled. Her cousin was fully apprised of their crowded and confused condition, and was ready to partake with good humour of whatever they could hastily prepare.

The dinner passed off far more agreeably than she supposed possible. By her father's direction, a dining table was unboxed and spread under the boughs of a magnificent live oak, and Judy, having ascertained where the stores were to be found, gave them not only a dinner, but a dessert to boot, which they all enjoyed with evident relish. Ah!--black and ugly as she was, that Judy was a jewel.

The Major had come thus hastily upon them for the purpose of insisting that the whole family should occupy quarters at the Fort as his guests, until the

new house, intended for their future reception, should be completed. To this Dr. Gordon objected that his presence was necessary for the progression of the work, but promised that at the earliest period when he could be spared for a few days, he would accept the invitation and bring the young people with him.

The visitor did not take his leave until the shades of evening warned him of the lapse of time. Mary had become much more interested, in consequence of her first distress and the pleasant termination, than she possibly could have been without these experiences; and as the whole family stood at the front door, watching his rapidly diminishing figure, she perpetrated a blunder which gave rise to much merriment.

Her father had remarked, "It will be long after dark before he can reach the Fort."

Mary rejoined, "Yes, sir, but," looking with an abstracted air, first at the table where they had enjoyed their pleasant repast, then at the darkening form of the soldier, and finally at the full moon which began to pour its silver radiance over the bay, "it will make no difference tonight, for it will be blue-eyed Mary."

All turned their eyes upon her in perplexity, to gather from her countenance the interpretation of her language; but Mary was still looking quietly at the moon. Harold thought the girl had become suddenly deranged.

Robert, who had observed her abstraction of mind, and who suspected the truth, began to laugh. Her father turned to her and asked, with a tone so divided between the ludicrous and the grave, that it was hard to tell which predominated, "What do you mean by 'blue-eyed Mary'?"

"Did I say blue-eyed Mary?" she exclaimed, reddening from her temples to her finger ends, and then giving way to a fit of laughter so hearty and so prolonged, that she could scarcely reply, "I meant *moonlight*."[#]

[#] It is but justice to say that this absurd mistake was *an actual occurrence.* For many a day afterwards the members of the company present on that occasion seldom alluded to moonlight among each other, but by the name of "blue-eyed Mary."

There was no resisting the impulse, all laughed with her, and long afterwards did it furnish a theme for merriment. Robert, however, was disposed to be so wicked on the occasion, that his father deemed it necessary to stop his teasing, by turning the laugh against him.

"It is certainly," said he, "the most ridiculous thing I have witnessed since Robert's queer prank at the prayer-meeting."

As soon as the word "prayer-meeting" was uttered, Robert's countenance

fell.

"What is it, uncle?" inquired Harold.

"O, do tell it, father," begged Mary, clapping her hands with delight.

"About a year since," said Dr. Gordon, "I attended a prayer-meeting in the city of Charleston, where thirty or forty intelligent people were assembled at the house of their pastor. It was night. Robert occupied a chair near the table, beside which the minister officiated, and where he could be seen by every person in the room: Not long after the minister's address began, Robert's head was seen to nod; and every once in a while his nods were so expressive, apparently, of assent to the remarks made, as to bring a smile upon the face of more than one of the company. But he was not content with nodding. Soon his head fell back upon the chair, and he snored most musically, with his mouth wide open. It was then nearly time for another prayer, and I was very much in hopes that when we moved to kneel, he would be awakened by the noise. But no such good fortune was in store for me. He slept through the whole prayer; and then, to make the scene as ridiculous as possible, he awoke as the people were in the act of rising, and, supposing they were about to kneel, he deliberately knelt down beside his chair, and kept that position until he was seen by every person present. There was a slight pause in the services, I think the clergyman himself was somewhat disconcerted, and afraid to trust his voice. Poor Robert soon suspected his mistake. He peeped cautiously around, then arose and took his seat with a very silly look. I am glad it happened. He has never gone to sleep in meeting since."

And from that time forth Mary never heard Robert allude to her moonlight; indeed he was so much cut down by this story, that for a day or two he was more than usually quiet. At last, however, an incident occurred which restored to him the ascendancy he had hitherto held over his cousin, by illustrating the importance of possessing a proper store of sound, practical knowledge.

The two had gone to examine an old well, near the house, and were speculating upon the possibility of cleansing it from its trash and other impurities, so as to be fit for use, when Harold's knife slipped from his hand and fell down the well. It did not fall into the water, but was caught by a half decayed board that floated on its surface.

"I cannot afford to lose that knife," said Harold, looking around for something to aid his descent, "I must go down after it."

"You had better be careful how you do that," interposed Robert, "it may not be safe."

"What," asked Harold, "are you afraid of the well's caving?"

"Not so much of its caving," replied Robert, "as of the bad air that may have collected at the bottom."

Harold snuffed at the well's mouth to detect such ill odours as might be

there, and said, "I perceive no smell."

"You mistake my meaning," remarked Robert. "In all old wells, vaults and places under ground, there is apt to collect a kind of air or gas, like that which comes from burning charcoal, that will quickly suffocate any one who breathes it. Many a person has lost his life by going into such a place without testing it beforehand."

"Can you tell whether there is any of it here?" asked Harold.

"Very easily, with a little fire," answered Robert. "AIR THAT WILL NOT SUPPORT FLAME, WILL NOT SUPPORT LIFE."

They stuck a splinter of rich pine in the cleft end of a pole, and, lighting it by a match, let it softly down the well. To Harold's astonishment the flame was extinguished as suddenly as if it had been dipped in water, before it had gone half way to the bottom.

"Stop, let us try that experiment again," said he.

They tried it repeatedly, and with the same result, except that the heavy poisonous air below being stirred by the pole, had become somewhat mingled with the pure air above, and the flame was not extinguished quite so suddenly as at first; it burnt more and more dimly as it descended, and then went out.

"I do believe there is something there," said he at last, "and I certainly shall not go down, as I intended. But how am I to get my knife?"

"By using father's magnet, which is a strong one," replied Robert. "Let us go and ask him for it."

On relating the circumstances to Dr. Gordon, he said, "You have made a most fortunate escape, Harold. Had you descended that well, filled as it is with carbonic acid gas, you would have become suddenly sick and faint, and would probably have fallen senseless before you could have called for help. *Make it a rule never to descend such a place without first trying the purity of its air, as you did just now.*"

"But can we not get that bad air out?" asked Harold.

"Yes, by various means, and some of them very easy," replied his uncle. "One is by exploding gunpowder as far down as possible; another is by lowering down and drawing up many times a thickly leaved bush, so as to pump out the foul air, or at least to mix it largely with the pure. But your knife can be obtained without all that trouble. Robert, can you not put him upon a plan?"

"I have already mentioned it, and we have come to ask if you will not let us have your magnet," replied Robert. "But," continued he smilingly, "I do not think that we shall have any need this time for the looking-glass."

Harold looked from one to the other for an explanation, and his uncle said:

"Last year Robert dropped his knife down a well, as you did, and proposed to recover it by means of a strong magnet tied to a string. But the well was deep

and very dark, and after fishing a long time in vain, he came to me for help. I made him bring a large looking-glass from the house, and by means of it reflected such a body of sun-light down the well that we could plainly see his knife at the bottom, stowed away in a corner. The magnet was strong enough to bring it safely to the top. You also may try the experiment."

With thanks, Harold took the offered magnet, tied it to a string, and soon recovered his knife.

CHAPTER V

RILEY--A THUNDERSTORM--ASCERTAINING THE DISTANCE OF OBJECTS BY SOUND--SECURITY AGAINST LIGHTNING--MEANS OF RECOVERING LIFE FROM APPARENT DEATH BY LIGHTNING

A few days after this incident another visitor was seen coming from Fort Brooke. This person was not a horseman, but some one in a boat, who seemed even from a distance to possess singular dexterity in the use of the paddle. His boat glided over the smooth surface of the bay as if propelled less by his exertions than by his will. Dr. Gordon viewed him through the spy glass, and soon decided him to be an Indian, who was probably bringing something to sell.

It so turned out. He was a half-breed, by the name of Riley, who frequently visited the fort with venison and turkeys to sell, and who on the present occasion brought with him in addition a fine green turtle. Major Burke, conceiving that his friends at Bellevue would prize these delicacies more than they at the fort, to whom they were no longer rarities, had directed the Indian to bring them, with his compliments, to Dr. Gordon.

Riley was a fine looking fellow, of about thirty years of age--tall, keen-eyed, straight as an arrow, and with a pleasing open countenance. He brought a note from the fort, recommending him for honesty and faithfulness.

Dr. Gordon was so much pleased with his general appearance, that he engaged him to return the following week with another supply of game, and prepared to remain several days, in case he should be needed in raising the timbers of the new house.

Toward the close of the week, the weather gave indications of a change. A

heavy looking cloud rose slowly from the west, and came towards them, muttering and growling in great anger. It was a tropical thunderstorm. The distant growls were soon converted into peals. The flashes increased rapidly in number and intensity, and became terrific. Mary and Frank nestled close to their father; and even stout-hearted Harold looked grave, as though he did not feel quite so comfortable as usual.

"That flash was uncommonly keen," Robert remarked, with an unsteady voice. "Do you not think, father, it was very near?"

Instead of replying, his father appeared to be busy counting; and when the crash of thunder was heard, jarring their ears, and making the earth quiver, he replied,

"Not very. Certainly not within a mile."

"But, uncle, can you calculate the distance of the lightning?" Harold asked.

"Unquestionably, or I should not have spoken with so much confidence. Robert imagined, as most people do, that a flash is near in proportion to its brightness; but that is no criterion. You must calculate its distance by the time which elapses between the flash and the report. Sound travels at the rate of about a mile in five seconds. Should any of you like to calculate the distance of the next flash, put your finger on your pulse, and count the number of beats before you hear the thunder."

An opportunity soon occurred. A vivid flash was followed after a few seconds by a roll, and then by a peal of thunder. All were busy counting their pulses. Mary ceased when she heard the first roll, exclaiming "Five!" The others held on until they heard the loud report, and said "Seven." Dr. Gordon reported only six beats of his own pulse, remarking,

"That flash discharged itself just one mile distant. Our pulses are quicker than seconds; and yours quicker than mine. Sound will travel a mile during six beats of a person of my age, and during seven of persons of yours."

"But, father," argued Mary, "I surely heard the thunder rolling when I said *five*."

"So did I," he answered; "and that proves that although the lightning discharged itself upon the earth at the distance of a mile, it *commenced* to flow from a point nearer overhead."

The young people were so deeply interested in these calculations, that they felt less keenly than they could have imagined possible the discomfort of the storm. This was Dr. Gordon's intention. But at last Mary and Frank winced so uneasily, when flashes of unusual brightness appeared, that their father remarked, "It is a weakness, my children, to be afraid of lightning that is seen and of thunder that is heard--*they are spent and gone.* Persons never see the flash that kills them--it does its work before they can see, hear, or feel."

At this instant came a flash so keen, that it seemed to blaze into their very eyes, and almost simultaneously came a report like the discharge of a cannon. Dr. Gordon's lecture was in vain; all except him and Harold started to their feet. Frank ran screaming to his father. Mary rushed to a pile of bedding, and covered herself with the bed-clothing. Robert looked at Mary's refuge, with a manifest desire to seek a place beside her. Harold fixed his eye upon his uncle, with a glance of keen inquiry.

"This is becoming serious," said the Doctor anxiously. "Something on the premises has been struck. Stay here, children, while I look after the servants. *Your safest place is in the middle of the room*, as far as possible from the chimney and walls, along which the lightning passes."

While giving these directions, at the same time that he seized his hat, cloak, and umbrella, William rushed in to say that the horses had been struck down and killed. They were stabled under a shelter erected near a tall palmetto--a tree so seldom struck by lightning, as to be regarded by the Indians as exempt from danger. The fluid had descended the trunk, tearing a great hole in the ground, and jarring down a part of the loose enclosure.

"Call all hands!" said the Doctor. "Throw off the shelter instantly, to let the rain pour upon them; and bring also your buckets and pails."

On his going out, the children crowded to the door, to see, if possible, the damage that was done; but he waved them all back, with the information that during a thunder storm an open door or window is one of the most dangerous places about a house. They quickly retired; Mary and Frank going to the bed, Robert taking a chair to the middle of the room, and drawing up his feet from the floor. Harold's remark was characteristic. "I wish uncle would let me help with the horses. I am sure that that is the safest place in this neighbourhood; for I never saw lightning strike twice on the same spot."

One of the horses was speedily revived by the falling rain. He staggered to his feet, then moved painfully away, smelling at his hoofs, to ascertain what ailed them. The other continued for an hour or more, to all appearance, dead. The servants dipped buckets and pails full of water from pools made by the rain, and poured them upon the lifeless body, until it was perfectly drenched. They had given up all hope of a restoration. William's eyes looked watery (for he was the coachman) and he heaved a sorrowful sigh over his brute companion. "Poor Tom!" he said, "what will Jerry do now for a mate?" Another half hour passed without any sign of returning life; and even William would have ceased his efforts, had it not been for his master's decided "Pour on water! Keep pouring!"

At last there appeared a slight twitching in one of the legs. Poor Tom was not dead after all. William gave a "Hurra boys! he's coming to," in which the others joined with unfeigned delight. "Now, William," said his master, "do you

and Sam take the strips of blanket that you rub with, and see if you cannot start his blood to flowing more rapidly. Tom will soon open his eyes."

Two of the servants continued to pour on water, the others to rub violently the head, neck, legs and body. The reviving brute moved first one foreleg, then the other, while the hinder legs were yet paralysed. Then he opened his eyes, raised his head, and made an effort to turn himself. As soon as he was able to swallow, Dr. Gordon ordered a drench of camphorated spirit, and left him with directions to the servants. "Listen all of you. I have shown you how to treat a horse struck down by lightning. Do you treat a person in the same way. Pour on water by the bucket full, until he gives some signs of life; then rub him hard, and give him some heating drink. *Don't give up trying for half a day.*"

The storm passed over. Tom and Jerry were once more united under the skilful management of William, who frequently boasted that "they were the toughest creatures in creation, even lightning could not kill them."

CHAPTER VI

THE ONLY WAY TO STUDY--TAKING COLD--RILEY'S FAMILY--THE HARE LIP---FISHING FOR SHEEPHEAD---FRANK CHOKED WITH A FISH BONE--HIS RELIEF--HIS STORY OF THE SHEEP'S HEAD AND DUMPLINGS--"TILL THE WARFARE IS OVER"

Dr. Gordon began to feel dissatisfied that his children were losing so much valuable time from study; for the house was yet loaded with baggage which could be put nowhere else, and their time was broken up by unavoidable interruptions. Until a more favourable opportunity, therefore, he required only that they should devote one hour every day to faithful study, and that they should spend the rest of their time as usefully as possible.

His theory of education embraced two very simple, but very efficacious principles. First, to *excite in his children the desire of acquiring knowledge*; and, secondly, to train them to *give their undivided attention to the subject in hand.* This last, he said, was the only way to study; and he told them, in illustration, the story of Sir Isaac Newton, who, on being asked by a friend, in view of his prodigious achievements, what was the difference, so far as he was conscious, between his mind and those of ordinary people, answered simply in the power of concentra-

tion.

Harold had been greatly discouraged at finding himself so far behind his cousins in the art of study, but by following the advice of his uncle, he soon experienced a great and an encouraging change. At first, it is true, he could scarcely give his whole mind to any study more than five minutes at a time, without a sense of weariness; but he persevered, and day by day his powers increased so manifestly that he used frequently to say to himself, "*concentration is everything--everything in study*."

But Dr. Gordon's instructions were by no means confined to books and the school-room; he used every favourable opportunity to give information on points that promised to be useful.

"Mary," said he one day, to his daughter, who was sitting absorbed in study, beside a window through which the sea breeze was pouring freshly upon her head and shoulders, and who had, in consequence, began to exhibit symptoms of a cold, "Mary, my daughter, remove your seat. Do you not know that to allow a current of air like that to blow upon a part of your person, is almost sure to produce sickness?"

"I know it, father," she replied, "and I intended some time since to change my seat, but the sum is so hard that I forgot all about the wind."

"I am glad to see you capable of such fixedness of mind," said he, "but I will take this opportunity to say to you, and to the rest, that there are two seasons, especially, when you should be on your guard against these dangerous currents of air,--one is when you are asleep, and the other is when your mind is absorbed in thought. At these times the pores of the skin are more than usually open, as may be seen by the flow of perspiration; and a current of cool air, at such a time, especially if partial, is almost certain to give cold."

"But how can we be on our guard, father," asked Mary with a smile, "when we are too far gone in sleep or in thought, to know what we are about!"

"We must take the precaution beforehand," he replied. "Make it a rule never to sleep nor to study in a partial current of air; and also remember that *the first moment* you perceive the tingling sensation of an incipient cold, you must obey the warning which kind nature gives you or else must bear the consequences."

Mary's cold was pretty severe. For days she suffered from cough and pain. But that day's lecture on currents of air, followed by so impressive an illustration, was probably more useful than her lesson in arithmetic; certainly it was longer remembered and more frequently acted upon.

True to his promise, Riley appeared at the appointed time with his supply of game. He said, however, that he should remain only a few days, because he had left his young wife sick. It interested Mary not a little to perceive that a savage could feel and act so much like a civilized being; and she was trying to think of

something complimentary to say upon this occasion, when he threw her all aback, by adding, that this was his *youngest* and *favourite* wife.

"What! have you two wives?" she exclaimed in horror.

"Yes, only two, now; one dead."

Her mind was sadly changed at this evidence of heathenism; but ere the day was over she received a still more impressive proof.

Dr. Gordon perceiving that he looked sad whenever an allusion was made to his home, he asked him if his wife was seriously sick, to which he answered, No.

"When I go home, last week," said he, "my squaw had a fine boy, big and fat. My heart glad. But I look and see a big hole in his mouth, from here to here," pointing from the lip to the nose.

"That is what we call a hare lip," said Dr. Gordon, "it is not uncommon."

"I sorry very much," continued Riley. "Child too ugly."

"But it can be easily cured," observed Dr. Gordon.

Riley looked at him inquiringly, and Dr. Gordon added, "O, yes, it can be easily cured. If you will bring your child here, any time, I will stop that hole in half an hour; and there will be no sign of it left, except a little scar, like a cut."

The Indian shook his head mournfully, "Can't bring him. Too late now."

"O, the child is dead?" inquired the Doctor. "I am sorry."

"Dead now," replied Riley. "I look at him one day, two day, tree day. Child too ugly. I throw him in the water."

"What!" exclaimed Dr. Gordon, suddenly remembering that it was the practice of the Indians to destroy all their deformed children. "You did not drown it?"

"Child ugly too much," answered Riley, with a softened tone of voice. "Child good for nothing. I throw him in the water."

Dr. Gordon was not only shocked, as any man of feeling would have been, under the circumstances, but he felt as a Christian, whose heart moved with compassion towards his dark skinned brother. He uttered not one word of rebuke or of condemnation; his time for speaking to the purpose had not yet come; and he carefully avoided everything in word and look which should widen the space which naturally exists between the white man and the Indian, the Christian and the pagan.

Poor Mary! She no sooner heard this confession, than she sidled away from her interesting savage, until wholly beyond his reach, and could scarcely look at him during his stay that week, without feelings akin to fear. An Indian, she learned, was an Indian after all.

While Riley was there the boys often borrowed his boat, and Harold tried to imitate his dexterity in the use of the paddle. They soon became great friends. On one of their excursions for fish, they went, by his direction, around a point of

land where the head of a fallen live oak lay in the water, and its partially decayed limbs were encrusted with barnacles and young oysters. There they soon caught a large supply of very fine fish of various sorts, particularly of the sheephead,--a delicious fish, shaped somewhat like the perch, only stouter and rounder, beautifully marked with broad alternate bands of black and white around the body, and varying in weight from half a pound to ten or fifteen pounds.

No one was more delighted than Frank, with the result of the excursion; for he was fond, as a cat, of everything in the shape of fish. But, it is said, there is no rose without its thorn; and so he found in the present case. He was enjoying, rather voraciously, the luxury of his favourite food, when a disorderly bone lodged crossways in the narrow part of his throat, and gave him excessive pain. Frank was a polite boy. Avoiding, as far as possible, disturbing the others by his misfortune, he slipped quietly from the table, and tried every means to relieve himself. But it was not until he had applied to his father, and, under his direction, swallowed a piece of hard bread, that he was able to resume his place.[#]

[#] Unwilling to mislead any of my young readers, by describing expedients and remedies that might not serve them in case of necessity, I have submitted my manuscript to several persons for inspection, and among others to a judicious physician and surgeon. It never occurred to me that in mentioning so simple a thing as swallowing a crust for the removal of a fish-bone, I could possibly do harm. To my surprise, however, my medical friend observed, that he supposed Dr. Gordon knew that the fishbone, which Frank swallowed, was *small* and *flexible*, or he would not have used that expedient.

"If," said he, "the substance which lodges in the throat is so stiff (a pin for instance) as not to be easily bent, the attempt to force it down by swallowing a piece of bread may be unsafe; it may lacerate the lining membrane, or, being stopped by the offending substance, it may cause the person to be worse choked than before."

"But, Doctor, what should the poor fellow do in such a case?" he was asked.

"I suspect Dr. Gordon would have used a large feather?"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, he would have rumpled its plume, so as to reverse the direction of the feathery part, and would have thrust that down the throat, below the pin or bone. On withdrawing the feather, the substance would be either found adhering to its wet sides, or raised on end, so that it could be easily swallowed."

With many thanks for this suggestion, the promise was made that the young readers of Robert and Harold should have the benefit of his advice. But I think that the best plan is to avoid the fish-bones.

Being not quite so humble as he was polite, however, he began to condemn the fish instead of himself for his accident. His father told him he had no right to say one word against the fish, which was remarkably free from bones, and was

just preparing to give him a gentle lecture on gormandizing, when Frank, foreseeing what was to come, was adroit enough to seize a moment's pause in the conversation, and to divert the subject, by asking with a very droll air,

"I wonder, father, if these sheephead are of the same kind with that one that butted the dumplings?"

"I do not know what dumplings you mean," said his father.

"O, did you never hear the story of the sheep's head and the dumplings? Well, brother Robert can tell you all about it."

"No, no," returned his father, who saw through the little fellow's stratagem. "No, no, Frank, it is your own story, and you must go through with it."

This was a trial, for Frank had never in his life made so long an extempore speech in the presence of the assembled family, as he had now imposed upon himself. But, in the desperation of the moment, he mustered courage, and thus spoke,

"There was once an old woman that left her little boy to mind a pot that had in it a sheep's head and some dumplings boiling for dinner, while she went to a neighbour's house to attend some sort of preaching. The little boy did not seem to have much sense; and had never minded a pot before; so when he saw the water boiling over, and the sheep's head and the dumplings bobbing about in every direction, he became frightened and ran for his mother, bawling at the top of his voice, 'Mammy! the dumplings! run!' She saw him coming in among the people, and tried to stop his bawling by shaking her head and winking her eyes at him; but he would not stop. He crowded right up to her, saying, 'Mammy, you needn't to wink nor to blink, for the sheep's head is butting all the dumplings out of the pot!'"

Throughout this story Frank did not make a balk or a blunder. He kept straight on, as if brimful of fun, and uttered the last sentence with such an affectation of grave terror, as produced a universal laugh.

His father had tried hard to keep up his dignity for the intended lecture, but it also gave way, and he contented himself with saying,

"Well, master Frank, I see you are at your old tricks again. And since you show such an aptitude for putting people into good humour, there will be reason to think you are in fault, if you ever put them out. Harold, has your aunt ever told you how Frank once *kissed himself out of a scrape with her*?"

Harold said she had not, and his uncle went on,

"It was when he was between three and four years of age. His mother had taken him on a visit to a friend of hers in the neighbourhood of Charleston, and he was allowed to sit at the dinner table with the ladies. But he became so disorderly and perverse that his mother, after an ineffectual reprimand or two, ordered him to go up stairs, meaning to her room above. The language was indefinite, and

Frank interpreted it to suit his own pleasure. He went up stairs, it is true, but only half way, where he seated himself so as to look at the table and the company, and then began to drum with his feet and to talk loud enough to be heard,

"'H-m-n-h! This is a very good place. I love these nice stairs. I'd rather be here than anywhere else in the world. I don't want any of that old dinner!'

"This was very rude language, and more especially when used in a house where he was a guest. His mother was so much mortified that as soon as dinner was over she took him to her room, gave him a sound strapping, and put him in a corner, where he was to stay, until he promised to be a good boy. Then she lay down on her bed as if to take a nap, but in reality to meditate what course to pursue towards her rude little child.

"Frank, you know, is fond of singing. There was a wild religious melody which he had learnt about that time, and which he was constantly singing. It had a short chorus at the end of every line, and a long chorus at the end of each verse, running this way,

"'Children of the heavenly King,
Till the warfare is over, Hallelujah,
As ye journey sweetly sing,
Till the warfare is over, Hallelujah.'

I forget the long chorus.

"Well, your aunt had not been upon the bed more than a few minutes, before Frank quietly slipped from his corner and stole close to the bedside to make friends. But his mother would not notice him. He bent over and gave her a kiss. Still she looked displeased. He tried another kiss, but she turned away her face. This was a damper. Frank was disheartened, but not in despair. He leaned over the bed, making a long reach, to try the effect of a third kiss.

"'There, Frank,' said his mother, in a displeased tone, 'that is enough. You need not kiss me any more.'

"'Yes, mother,' said he, leaning far over, and taking hold of her, 'I mean to kiss you *till the warfare is over, Hallelujah.*'

"I need not say that, from that moment, the warfare *was* over, and Frank behaved himself well through the remainder of the visit.

"And now, since he has managed to escape the lecture I was about to give him on eating too fast, I hope he will hereafter cultivate the recollection of *today*

and the fish-bones."

CHAPTER VII

BUG IN THE BAR--VISIT TO PORT BROOKE--EVADING BLOODHOUNDS--CONTEST WITH DOGS AND MEANS OF DEFENCE--AMUSING ESCAPE FROM A WILD BULL AND CONVERSATION ON THE SUBJECT

While Riley was at Bellevue the workmen succeeded in raising the frame of the new house, and in completing the most laborious part of the work. On the last days of his stay he was dispatched with a message to Fort Brooke, to say that on the following Tuesday Dr. Gordon and family would make their promised visit.

During the interval nothing of special interest occurred, except a painful accident that happened to Harold. He was awakened in the night by a sudden tickling in his ear. This was caused by a harvest bug--a black hard-winged insect, nearly an inch long. When first feeling it, and uncertain what it was, he sprang up in bed, and struck the ear violently from behind, in the hope of jarring it out. Failing in this, he poured his ear full of water; but still not succeeding, he felt along the wall for a large needle he recollected seeing there the evening before, and with that endeavoured to pick it out. The frightened bug finding itself so energetically pursued into its unnatural hiding place, went deeper, and began to scratch with its clogged feet, and to bite upon the tender drum of the ear. The pain it caused was excruciating. Harold, feeling that he must soon go into spasms, unless relieved, wakened his uncle, and entreated earnestly for help. To his inexpressible delight Dr. Gordon said he could relieve him in a minute; and seizing the night lamp he poured the ear full of oil. Scarcely had this fluid closed around the intruder, before it scrambled out, and reached the external ear just in time to die.

Harold could not find words for his gratitude.

"Uncle," said he, "you may think me extravagant, but I assure you the pain was so intense, that I was thinking seriously, in case you could not relieve me, of making Sam chop my ear open with a hatchet. This I suppose would have killed me; but it must have been death in either case."

On the day appointed, they went to Fort Brooke in the pleasure boat, Dr. Gordon being at the helm, and Robert and Harold taking turns in managing the

sails. The wind was fair, and the light ripple of the water was barely sufficient to give a graceful dancing to their beautiful craft. Far below the transparent waves, they could see the glistening of bright shells upon the bottom, and every now and then the flash of a silver-sided fish.

At the fort they were received with the courtesy that so generally marks gentlemen of the army; and the three days of their stay passed off very pleasantly. The reveille and tattoo, the daily drill, and the practising with cannon, were novelties to the young back-woodsmen. Frank was exceedingly surprised, as well as amused, to see cannon-balls making "ducks and drakes," as he called them, upon the water. He had often thrown oyster-shells, and flat stones, so as to skim in this way, but he had no idea that it could be done with a cannon-ball.

On the last day of their visit, Harold escaped from an unpleasant predicament, only by the exercise of cool courage and ready ingenuity. He had gone with Frank to visit a cannon target, a mile or more distant. Wandering along the bank of the Hillsborough river, which flows hard by the fort, and then entering the woods on the other side of the road, he was suddenly accosted by a man on horseback, who had been concealed behind a bower of yellow jessamines.

"Good day, my young friend. Have you been walking much in these woods today?"

Harold said that he had not, and inquired why the question was asked. The man replied, "I am watching for a villainous Indian-negro, who was seen skulking here this morning. He has been detected in stealing, and several persons will soon come with blood-hounds to hunt him. If you see his track" (and he described its peculiarity), "I hope you will let us know."

Harold consented to do so, and walked on, unwilling to be the spectator of the scene. Returning to the road, and walking some distance, the thought flashed into his mind that possibly the dogs might fall upon his own trail. It was certain that they would naturally take the freshest trail, and he was confident that the man did not know which way he went. The dogs were probably fierce, and it would be exceedingly difficult, in case of an attack, to defend himself and Frank too. Becoming every moment more uneasy, he went to the roadside and cut himself a stout bludgeon. Frank watched the operation, and suspected that something was wrong, though he could not conjecture what.

"Cousin," said he, "what did you cut that big stick for?"

"A walking-stick," he replied: "Is it not a good one?"

"Yes, pretty good; but I never saw you use a walking-stick before."

At that moment, Harold heard afar off the deep bay of the blood-hounds, opening upon a trail. The sound became every moment more distinct. He could distinguish the cry of four separate dogs. They were evidently upon his scent. He clutched his club, and looked fiercely back. It was a full half mile to the place

where, having left the man, he emerged into the road; and there were several curves in it so great that he could neither see nor be seen for any distance. Necessity is the mother of invention. A bright thought came into his mind. "Stay here," said he to Frank, "and don't move one peg till I come back."

He was at a sharp bend of the road, on the convex side of which lay a little run of water, skirted by a thick undergrowth. He took a course straight with the road, and hurrying as fast as possible into the wet low ground, returned upon his own track; then, taking Frank in his arms, sprang with all his might, at right angles, to his former course, and ran with him to a neighbouring knoll, which commanded a view of the road, where he stopped to reconnoitre. He had *doubled*, as hunters term this manoeuvre, practised by hares and foxes when pursued by hounds; and his intention was, if still pursued, to place Frank in a tree, and with his club to beat off the dogs until the hunters arrived.

It was soon proved that the hounds were actually upon his track. They came roaring along the road, with their tails raised, and their noses to the ground. Arriving at the spot where Frank had stood, they did not pursue the road, but plunged into the bushes, upon the track which Harold had doubled, and went floundering into the mire of the stream beyond, where they soon scattered in every direction, hunting for the lost trail. The boys did not pursue their walk; having made so narrow an escape, they turned their steps, without delay, towards the fort.

"Cousin," inquired Frank, on their way back, "did not those dogs come upon our track!" Harold replied, "Yes."

"And did you cut that big stick to fight them?"

"Yes."

"And did you intend to cheat them by going into the bushes, and coming back the same way, and then jumping off, with me in your arms?" Harold still said, "Yes."

"Well, now, cousin," inquired Frank, "where did you learn that nice trick?"

"From the rabbits and foxes," he answered. "I did not know who could tell me better than they, how to escape from dogs."

Frank said he always knew that foxes were very cunning, but he never before heard of any one's taking a fox for his teacher.

On returning to the fort, Dr. Gordon applauded the ruse, and congratulated Harold upon his escape; but, at the same time, informed him that his plan was not to be relied upon. "A well trained hound," said he, "is as competent to nose out a doubled track as you are to devise it. I attribute your escape, partly to the fact that the dogs are not staunch, and partly to the help afforded you by the miry bottom, on which your scent could not lie."

The conversation now turned naturally upon contests with dogs, and dif-

ferent methods of escape. Dr. Gordon related the story of his having defended himself and his little brother against three fierce dogs, when he was about Robert's age, by putting his back against a wall, and beating off the assailants with a club.

"But were you ever forced to fight them when you had no stick?" asked Harold.

"Fortunately not," his uncle replied. "Though I knew a person once who was caught as you describe, and who devised at least a show of defence. He took off his hat and shoved it at the dog, with a fierce look, whenever it approached. But I presume that his success depended more upon the expression of his countenance than upon the threatening appearance of his weapon. A *fearless eye* and *a quiet resolute manner*, is the best defence against *any enemy*, human or brute, that can be devised.

"I did, however, witness one expedient adopted by a sailor, which goes to show what can be accomplished in an emergency of the kind, by a cool head and a steady hand. A large dog rushed at him, without provocation, on the public wharf. The sailor spoke to him, looked at him, shoved his hat at him, but in vain. The dog flew at his legs. Quietly drawing his knife, as a last resource, and holding his hat in his left hand, he stooped, and allowing the dog to seize his hat, passed his knife underneath it, into his throat. The dog staggered back, mortally wounded, not having seen the hand that slew him."

On Friday, September 24th, the company returned to Bellevue; and on the week following, had the opportunity of witnessing an act of cool courage, which Harold declared to evince far more ingenuity and composure of mind, than his own escape from the blood-hounds.

Riley had made them another visit, and was engaged at work upon the house, under the direction of Sam, the carpenter. Dr. Gordon took the young people in the pleasure boat, to spend an afternoon in the agreeable occupation of obtaining another supply of fish. After trying for some time, with poor success, they saw Riley coming along the bluff; his object being, as was afterwards shown, to point out the reason of their failure, and to tell them what to do.

As he approached, a fierce looking bull rushed from a grove of live oaks, and made furiously at him. Had Riley been near the shore he might, and probably would, have sprung into the water, and thus escaped; but the enraged beast was between him and his place of refuge. The company in the boat felt seriously anxious for his safety, since there appeared little chance of his escaping without a contest. But Riley took the matter very coolly. He glided to a little clump of saplings, and holding to one of them at arm's length, seemed to enjoy the evident mortification of the bull in being so narrowly dodged. He was very expert in keeping the small tree between him and it; and as the circle in which he ran was much smaller than that in which the bull was compelled to move, his task

was easy. The furious animal pushed first with one horn then with the other; he ran suddenly and violently; he pawed the earth, and bellowed with rage; his eyes flashed and his mouth foamed, but it was in vain. Soon Riley watched his opportunity, and glided nimbly from that tree to one nearer the boat; then to another and another; the bull following with every demonstration of impotent rage. This was done merely to teaze. Finally becoming wearied with this profitless, though amusing sport, he gathered a handful of sand, and provoking the bull to push at him again, forced a part of the sand into one eye, and the remainder into the other, and then left him perfectly blinded for the time, and rushing madly from place to place, while Riley came laughing to the beach, and delivered his message.

"Coolly and cleverly done!" said Dr. Gordon, at the end of the contest. "That is certainly a new idea, in the way of involuntary bull baiting, which is worth remembering. But I advise you young folks not to try it, except in case of a similar necessity. It is safer to climb a tree or fence, or even to plunge into the water."

"Riley had no other chance," remarked Harold.

"He had not," Dr. Gordon rejoined, "and therefore I regard his expedient as valuable. Should you be pursued in an open field, the danger would be still greater. Then the best plan would be to *detain* the beast by something thrown to attract his attention. Cattle are made very quickly angry by the sight of a red garment. If anything of this colour, such as a shawl or pocket handkerchief can be dropped when you are pursued by one, it will be almost certain to catch his eye, and to engage him awhile in goring it. If nothing red can be dropped, then let him have something else from your person--a hat, coat, or a spread umbrella--in fact anything calculated to attract his eye."

"I have heard," observed Robert, "of jumping upon a bull's back, as he stooped his head to toss."

"So have I," his father added, "but spare me if you please, the necessity; none but a monkey, or a person of a monkey's agility can do it successfully. I should sooner risk the chance of springing suddenly behind him, and seizing his tail. At least I should like to administer that sound belabouring with a stick which he would so richly deserve, and which might teach him better manners."

"Or to twist his tail," said Harold merrily. "I believe that will make a bull bellow, as soon as putting sand into his eyes. And what is better, you can keep on twisting, until you are sure than his manners are thoroughly taught."

CHAPTER VIII

The work of house-building and improvement now went forward with visible rapidity. By the first day of October, the new dwelling-house was sufficiently advanced to allow the family to move into it; and in a fortnight more, the new kitchen was covered, and such other changes made, in and about the house, as to give it quite a genteel and comfortable appearance. As it became necessary about this time for the workmen to attend to some inside work, which could be more easily accomplished by having the family out of the way, Dr. Gordon stopped the young people after school, and said to them:

"Children, I have a proposition to make. But before doing so, who can tell me what 'marooning' means?"

All turned their eyes to Robert, whom they regarded as a sort of walking dictionary; and he answered with a slight hesitation--"I should say, living pretty much in the way we have lived most of the time since we came to Bellevue. A person maroons when he lives in an unsettled state."

"You are nearly right; but to be more critical. The word 'maroon' is of West Indian origin--coming I think from the island of Jamaica. It meant at first a free negro. But as those who ran away from their masters became virtually free for the time, it came afterwards to mean a runaway negro. To maroon therefore means to go from home and live like a runaway negro. I wish to ask if any one present is in favour of marooning?"

All were silent, and Dr. Gordon continued, "To maroon means also to go to some wild place, where there is plenty of game or fish, and to live upon what we can obtain by our own skill. Are there any persons now in favour of marooning?"

"I am--and I--and I!" was the universal response. "When shall it be? Where shall it be?"

"You are too fast," said the Doctor. "I have one of two propositions to make. We must for a few days give up the house to the workmen. Now the question to be decided is, Shall we return to Fort Brooke, and spend our time among the guns and cannons; or shall we go to Riley's Island at the mouth of the bay, and spend it among the deer and turkeys, the fish and oysters, of which we have heard so much? There are advantages and disadvantages on both sides; and my own mind is so perfectly balanced that I will leave the decision to you."

Harold's eyes flashed fire at the prospect of his old employment; still he said nothing; he waited to know what the others preferred. Robert looked at him, and in a moment caught the contagion. Indeed it seemed as if a sort of mesmeric influence had swayed the whole party, for they did nothing more than exchange with each other one hurried glance, and then unanimously cried out,

"Riley's Island! Riley's Island!"

"Remember," said Dr. Gordon, "that in marooning we must wait upon ourselves. William is the only servant I can take. His time will be fully occupied with cooking, and other duties belonging to the tent. We cannot depend on him for anything more than is absolutely necessary. Are you still of the same mind?"

"The same!" they all replied.

"Still I will not hold you to your promises until you have had further time for reflection," said he. "You may not have looked at all the difficulties of the case. I will give you until dinner-time to make up your minds; and to help your thoughts, I will assign to each of you an office, and make you responsible for providing all things necessary for a week's excursion, to begin in the morning.

"Harold, I appoint you master of the hunting and fishing departments.

"Robert shall be sailing-master, and provide for the literature of the party.

"Mary shall be housekeeper still, and mistress of the stores.

"And Master Frank shall be--I know not what to make him, unless *supercargo*."

"Now I wish you each to sit down at your leisure, and make out a written list, to be presented to me at dinner-time, of all things needed in your several departments."

They responded very heartily, and were about to retire, when Dr. Gordon, observing a comical expression on Frank's face, said, "What is the matter, Frank? Are you not willing to be supercargo?"

"I do not know what supercargo is," answered Frank, "unless it is somebody to catch rabbits. But I know how to do that. So I mean to take my dog and hatchet, and a box of matches."

"Well done, Frank," said his father; "you have the marooning spirit if you do not know what supercargo is. But where did you learn the art of catching rabbits?"

"Oh, I learnt it from cousin Harold," said he. "We got a rabbit into a hollow tree, and caught him there. *I* caught him, father, with my own hand; I know exactly how to catch a rabbit."

"Very well, Mr. Supercargo, carry what you will. But go along all of you, and be ready with your lists against dinner-time."

They retired in great glee to plan out and prepare. Robert and Harold, having first gone to the beach to think alone, were to be seen, half an hour afterwards, in their room, busily engaged with pencil in hand. At this time Frank came in. He had been almost frantic with joy at the prospect of the change; and after having romped with his dog Fidelle and the goats in the yard, he had come to romp with any one who would join him in the house.

"Brother Robert and cousin Harold," said he, "what are you doing? Are you

writing? are you ciphering? are you studying? Why do you not answer me?" He was evidently in a frolic.

"Go to your play, Frank, and do not bother us," returned Robert, impatiently; "we are thinking."

"I know you are; for father said we are thinking all the time we are awake, and sometimes while we are asleep. But I want to know what you are thinking about so hard."

"Don't you know," Harold answered, mildly, "that we are going to Riley's Island tomorrow, and that Robert and I have to make out a list of what we are to carry? We are making our lists."

"Ah ha! but I have to carry some things too," said he. "Father is going to let me catch the rabbits there; and he called me a ----, some kind of a ----; I forget the name, but it means the person to catch rabbits. What is the name, brother?"

"Supercargo?"

"Yes, that's it--supercargo. Mustn't I think of something too?"

"Certainly," replied Harold, humouring the joke. "But the way *we* did, was first to go off by ourselves, and think of what we were to carry; then to come in and write off our lists. Do you go now and think over yours, and when you come in I will write it for you."

Frank went out, but he was not gone long. He insisted on having his list made out at once.

"What do you wish to carry?" Harold asked. Frank told him.

"Now," said Harold, "I will make a bargain with you. If you do not trouble us before we have finished our work, I will write your list for you so that you yourself can read it. Will you stay out now?"

"That I will. But can you write it so that I can read it?"

"Yes, and will not print it either."

"Well, then you must be a very smart teacher, almost as smart as the foxes; for father has been teaching me this summer to make writing marks, but I have never made one of the writing marks yet."

Harold however persisted in his promise, and he and Frank were as good as their several words. Frank, it is true, did creep on tip-toe, and peep through the crack of the door, but he disturbed nobody; and when at last the boys came out, Harold presented him with a folded paper, which he instructed him to put into his pocket, and not to open till the lists were called for.

At the appointed hour they all assembled. The meal passed pleasantly off; not an allusion had as yet been made to the proposed excursion. It was a part of Dr. Gordon's training to practise his children in self-restraint. He could however discern by their looks that their decisions remained as before. Said he, "I presume you have all made up your minds to the marooning party; am I correct?"

"O yes, sir, yes," was the answer, "and we are all ready to report, not excepting Frank and William."

"Really, you have done wonders! But let me call upon you each in turn. Harold McIntosh, you are hunting and fishing-master. Let me hear your report."

Harold took from his pocket a piece of paper about as broad as his hand, and a little longer. Besides the arms, ammunition and appurtenances, fishing-hooks, lines and nets, he closed his list with reading "brimstone."

"And what use," asked his uncle, "do you expect to make of that?"

"Taking bee-trees," he replied. "Brimstone is used in driving bees from the honey."

"Whether we meet with bee-trees or not, the brimstone will be in nobody's way; let it go. Mr. Hunting-master your list is perfect. Now Robert, yours."

His list embraced all that the boat would need for comfort, or for repair in case of accident. The books selected had reference to the taste of each. Shakespeare for his father, Goldsmith's Natural History for Harold, Scott's Napoleon for himself, Robinson Crusoe and Botany for his sister, and (in a spirit of mischief) Old Mother Hubbard for Frank.

But Frank was quite indignant at what he knew to be an insinuation against his childish taste. "I will not have old Mother Hubbard for my book," he said, as soon as he heard the list read. "I have passed that long ago; I wanted to carry Jack the Giant Killer."

"Scratch out Mother Hubbard," said his father to Robert, "and put down Jack. Your list, Master Robert, is pretty good; but I shall take the liberty of adding several volumes to the stock, in case of bad weather. And beside this, I should advise you all to carry your pocket Testaments, that you may continue your plan of daily reading. I should be sorry, and almost afraid, to let our sports interfere with our devotions."

Up to this time Frank had been listening to what had been read or spoken. But now, on a sign from Harold, he took a paper from his pocket, and, looking at its contents, commenced capering round the room, saying, "I *can* read it--I can read every word of it!"

"Read what?" asked his father.

"My list," replied Frank, "that cousin Harold wrote for me. I can read it all!"

"Then let us have it."

[image]

pictures of items on the list

"Here," said he, "is my hatchet."

"And here is my bow and arrows."

"And here is my dog; only it is not half so pretty as Fidelle."

"And down here at the bottom--that is--that is--I believe it is--either a block or a brick-bat. O, now I remember, it is my box of matches."

"Bravo, Frank," said his father, "you do credit to your teacher. I doubt whether I could myself have guessed what that last thing was intended for. Your list may pass also.

"Now, Miss Mary, let us have yours. You have had more to think of than all the others put together, and yet I'll warrant you are nearly as perfect in proportion."

Mary blushed to hear the commendation bestowed upon her on trust, and replied, "I doubt it, father. For though it is very long, I am all the while thinking of something else to be added, and I am pretty sure there is a great deal yet that I have forgotten." She then read her own list, containing about thirty-five articles, and William's, embracing half a dozen more; upon which her father continued to bestow praise for the house-wifery they showed, and to each of which he made some slight additions.

"Now, William," said he, "do you select two moderately sized boxes, and aid Miss Mary to pack everything in her line so as not to crowd the boat. Remember, too, to put in for Riley a half bushel of salt, a loaf of sugar, and a peck of wheat flour. Pack the boat, and have it complete this evening, however late it should take you, that there may be no delay in the morning."

They were no sooner dismissed from table than all went vigorously to work. Guns were cleaned--hooks and lines examined--boxes packed--all things being done by classes. Then each person put up an extra suit or two of clothing, in case of accidents. And so expeditiously did the work go forward, that by five o'clock that evening the boat was ready for her trip.

CHAPTER IX

EMBARKATION--ABDUCTION EXTRAORDINARY--EFFORTS TO ESCAPE--ALTERNATE HOPES AND FEARS--DESPAIR--VESSEL IN THE DISTANCE--RENEWED HOPES AND EFFORTS--WATER-SPOUT--FLASH OF LIGHTNING AND ITS EFFECTS--MAKING FOR SHORE--GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many visions that night danced before the young sleepers--prancing deer with bright eyes and branching horns; turkeys running, flying, fluttering; white tents, mossy beds, and all the wild scenes of woodland life. They were up and dressed at daybreak. The wind was fair, and the day promised to be fine. Frank's little feet were pattering over the whole house and yard, carrying him into everybody's way, on the pretence of rendering assistance. There was one useful suggestion which he made. He had gone to each room and corner in the house, saying "good-bye" to every person and thing, chairs, tables, and all, when at last he came to his father's cloak and umbrella, kept in the same corner.

"Good-bye, umbrella," said he, "but as for you, good Mr. Cloak, father will want you to sleep on. Poor umbrella! are you not sorry? Don't you want to go too? But, father!" he cried, running into the next room, "had we not better carry the umbrella? Maybe we shall need it."

"That is a good idea, Master Frank," said his father. "Do you take charge of the umbrella, as a part of your office, and see it put into the boat."

Frank ran back to the room he had left, and taking the umbrella from its corner, he said, "O ho, my little fellow, father says you may go. Are you not glad I asked for you? But you must be a good boy, and not put yourself in anybody's way. Come now, spread your wings, and let me see how glad you look."

He opened the umbrella, and flapped it several times to make it look lively, then closed it, and set it beside the cloak where it belonged. Presently he heard the tinkle of a little silver bell, and knew that it was the signal for family prayers. He went to the breakfast-room, and took his seat.

Dr. Gordon's children were well versed in the Scriptures, and were remarkably attentive during the reading of them. Perhaps one secret of this fact was to be found in their father's practice of stopping every few verses during the family reading to ask them questions on what had been read, and briefly to explain what they could not otherwise comprehend. This morning the children observed that the chapter read was remarkably appropriate to their circumstances, and that the Doctor prayed particularly that the Lord would preserve them from all sin and harm during their excursion; that he would preside over their pleasures, and that he would make their temporary absence the means of their knowing him better, and loving him more.

They breakfasted as the sun was rising. While at table no one could speak of anything but the voyage and the island, and what they expected to see, do, and enjoy. The boat was at the wharf, which had been erected for the brig. It was packed, and ready for departure, with the exception of a few things to be carried by hand. William had breakfasted at the same time with the family, and now came in, saying, "All ready, sir."

"Come, children," said Dr. Gordon, "let us go."

"Come, umbrella," said Frank, "you are to go with me."

"O, father," exclaimed Mary, as they approached the shore, "there is Nanny with her sweet little kids. See how anxiously she looks at the boat, and tries to say, 'Do let me go too.' Had we not better take her? She is so tame; and then you are so fond of milk in your coffee."

"I doubt," he replied, "whether there will be room for dogs, goats, and ourselves too. But we can easily determine; and as I know that all of you are as fond of milk as I am, I will let her go if there is room."

They took their places, Dr. Gordon at the helm, Robert and Harold amidships, Mary and Frank next to their father, and William in the bow. Everything had been stowed so snugly away, and the boat was withal so roomy, that Nanny and her kids were invited to a place.

"Now, children, for order's sake," said Dr. Gordon, "I will assign the bow of the boat, where William is, to Nanny and her kids; Fidelle must lie here by Frank and Mum may go with Harold. Mary, call your pet, and have her in her place."

A word about the dogs. Fidelle was a beautiful and high-blooded spaniel, that might have been taught anything which a dog could learn, but whose only accomplishments as yet were of a very simple character, and confined chiefly to such tricks as were a source of amusement to her little master. Mum was a large, ugly, rough-looking cur, whose value would never have been suspected from his appearance. He was brave, faithful, and sagacious; strong, swift-footed, and obedient. But his chief value consisted in his education. He came from the pine barrens of Georgia, where Dr. Gordon had first seen and purchased him, and where he had been trained, according to the custom of the wild woodsmen there, to hunt silently; and in following the trail of a deer or turkey to keep just in advance of his master, and to give suitable indications of being near the object of pursuit. Mum was no common dog; and he proved of inestimable service to the young adventurers in their coming difficulties.

"Draw in the anchor, William, while I cast off at the stern," said Dr. Gordon. "But hold! let us see what that means." He pointed with his finger to a horseman, who turned a point on the beach, and seeing them about to depart, waved his hat to say "stop!" The horseman rode at full speed, and soon was within speaking distance. He bore a note from the surgeon at Fort Brooke, requesting the loan of a certain instrument which Dr. Gordon had promised when on his visit, and for which there was now a sudden call.

"Keep your places, children," said the Doctor. "I shall be gone only five minutes. William, do you take my place, and keep the boat steady by holding to this frame."

He ascended the wharf, went with the soldier to the house, and was absent a very few minutes; but during that interval an event occurred which separated

them for a long, long time and made them oftentimes fear that they should never more meet in this world.

The position of the boat at the wharf was peculiar. Her stern had been lashed to the timbers, for the purpose of keeping it steady, until all had entered; and the bow was kept to its place by the anchor dropped into the two and half fathoms water, which "was had" there at high tide. The fastening to the stern having been cast off, preparatory to leaving, William was now holding to the wharf, awaiting his master's return.

This was not long after sunrise, at which moment they had heard the report of a cannon unusually loud from the fort. Scarcely had Dr. Gordon disappeared from the bluff, when the young people noticed a heavy ripple of the water, between them and the fort, indicating that it was disturbed by a multitude of very large fish, moving with rapidity towards the sea.

"What can they be?" was a question which all asked, with a curiosity not unmixed with fear, as they looked upon the approaching waves. William held firmly to the pier head, that the boat should not be moved too roughly by the disturbed water.

"Mas' Robert," said he, with anxious, dilating eyes, "I do believe it is a school of dem debbil-fish. Yes," and his eyes grew wild and his lips became ashy, "dey making right for dis pint."[#]

[#] The following is a description of the hideous monster known in our waters as the Devil Fish. It is a flat fish, belonging to the family of Rays, and usually measures somewhere between ten and twenty feet from tip to tip of its wings. On each side of its mouth is a flexible arm, with which the animal grasps and feeds. It appears to be as remarkable for its stupidity as it is for its size, strength, and ugliness, seldom letting go anything which it once seizes with its arms. A few years since, one was discovered dead upon a mud flat near St. Mary's, Georgia, grasping even in death a strong stake of which it had taken hold during high water. The incident related in the following pages is in perfect keeping with the habits of the fish. There are hundreds of persons now living, who recollect a similar adventure which took place in the bay of Charleston. On every occasion of serious alarm the fish makes for the deep water of the ocean, and sometimes so frantically as to run high and dry ashore. Whoever wishes to read more on this subject, can do so by referring to a volume called "Carolina Sports," in which the author (Hon. William Elliott), sketches with lively and graphic pen some most adventurous scenes, in which he himself was principal actor.

The children sprang to their feet, and made a rush to the stern, in the effort to get out of the boat, but William put his hand against them, and exclaimed piteously, "Back! Mas' Robert--Mas' Harrol! All of you! You habn't time to git out! Here

dey come! Down on your seats! For massy's sake, down! ebery body!"

They were about to obey, when there was a whirl, and then a jerk of the boat, that threw them flat on their faces. They heard William's voice crying hoarsely, "O Lord hab----;" and when they arose and looked around, they saw that he was missing, and that their boat was rushing onward with a swiftness that made the water boil.

"William! William!" Robert called in bewilderment; but no answer came, and they saw him no more.

"O mercy! Brother Robert! cousin Harold!" cried Mary, "what is the matter?"

Robert looked vacantly towards the receding shore. Harold answered, "One of these fish has tripped our anchor, and is carrying us out to sea."

The horrid truth was evident; and it sent a chill like death through their limbs and veins. Mary screamed and fell back senseless. Robert started up as though about to spring from the boat. Harold covered his face with his hands, gave one groan, then with compressed lips and expanded nostrils hastened to the bow of the boat. As for poor little Frank, it was not for some moments that he could realize the state of the case; but when he did, his exhibition of distress was affecting. He stretched his hands towards home; and as he saw his father running to the bluff, he called out, "O, father, help us--dear father! O send a boat after us! O----!" Perceiving his father fall upon his knees and clasp his hands in prayer, he cried out, "O, yes, father, pray to God to help us, and he will do it--God can help us!" Then falling upon his own knees, he began, "O God bless my father and mother, my brothers and sisters! O God help us!"

By this time the boat had passed fully half a mile from shore. Harold's movement forward had been made with the intention of doing something, he knew not what, to relieve the boat from the deadly grasp of the devil fish. He first seized his rifle, and standing upon the forward platform, aimed it at the back of the monster, which could be distinctly seen at two fathoms' distance, clutching the chain which constituted their cable. Despairing of reaching him with a ball through the intervening water, he laid aside the rifle, and seizing William's ax, aimed several lusty blows at the cable chain. He struck it just on the edge of the boat where there was the greatest prospect of breaking it; but the chain was composed of links unusually short and strong, and the blows of the ax served only to sink it into the soft wood of the boat.

"Robert," said he, "look for Frank's hatchet, and come here." But Robert, stupefied with fear, sat staring at him from beside his prostrate sister and weeping brother, and seemed neither to understand nor to hear.

"Robert," he repeated, "get up, and be a man. Bring Frank's hatchet, and help me break this chain."

Still he did not come. "It is no use, Harold," he replied. "Do you not see that sister is dead? William is dead too! We shall all die!"

"Robert! Robert!" he reiterated, almost with a threat, "do rouse up and be a man. Mary is not dead, she has only fainted; she will come to directly. Come here and help me."

As he said, "She has only fainted," Robert sprang from his seat, took off his cap, dipped it full of water, poured it on her face, rubbed her palms and wrists to start the blood into circulation, then blew in her face, and fanned her with his wet cap. In the course of a minute Mary began to breathe, and then to sigh.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, "she *has* only fainted! she is coming to! Frank, do you fan her now and I will help Harold."

But Harold had helped himself. Going to Frank's parcel, he had taken out the hatchet, and returned to the bows, where he was now adjusting the ax, preparatory to his work. "There, Robert," on his coming up, "do you hold the ax firmly under the chain, while I strike this link with the hatchet."

He did so, and Harold struck a blow upon the chain, so heavy that it rang again. Instantly they staggered, said fell backwards in the boat. The sharp sound of the hatchet upon the links had been conveyed along the metal to the fish, and made it dart forward with a sudden jerk. Harold rose, and looked on a moment. "We can't help his being frightened, Robert. We must break the chain. Let us try again."

He struck blow after blow, though the fish seemed to be affected by each as by an electric shock. Robert held back his arm. "Stop! stop! Harold, we are sinking!"

It was even so. The fish, frightened by the sharp repeated sounds, had gone down so far as to sink the bow of the boat within a few inches of the water. But Harold was not to be stopped. With an almost frantic laugh, he looked fiercely at the slimy monster beneath, then at his pale companions, and raised his arm for another blow. "Robert," said he, "it must be so. We must break the chain or die." He struck again, again, and again, until the water began to ripple over the bow, and splash upon his hand. He stopped, and tears came into his eyes.

"Look, Harold, at the staple," said Robert. "Let us see if that cannot be started." They tried it, striking from side to side, but in vain. The boat was too well made; the staple was too large, and too firmly imbedded in the timbers to be disturbed; and, moreover, it was guarded by an iron plate all around. Harold decided it was easier to break the chain. "Is there not a file, nor even a chisel among the tools?" he asked. They rummaged among the several boxes and parcels, but no tools of the kind could be found; and then they sat down pale, panting, and dispirited.

By this time the boat had passed out of the bay. The persons on shore, the

houses, indeed the very trees which marked the place of their abode, had faded successively from sight. They had been running through the water at a fearful rate, for an hour and a half, and were now in the broad open gulf, moving as madly as before. The frightened fish, alarmed at these repeated noises in the boat, and grasping still more convulsively the chain which was to it an object of terror, had outstripped its hideous companions, and after passing from the bay had turned towards the south.

"There is Riley's Island!" said Robert, pointing sadly to a grove of tall palmettoes, which they were passing. "And yonder is a boat, near shore, with a man in it. O, if Riley could see us, and come after us! And yet what if he did! No boat can be moved by wind or paddle as we are moving." After a few minutes he resumed: "There is one plan yet which we have not tried; it is to saw the chain in two with pieces of crockery. I have read of marble being cut with sand, and of diamonds being cut with horse hair. And I think that if we work long enough we can cut the chain in two with a broken plate. Shall we try it?"

"O, yes, try anything," Harold replied, "But," looking at the flapping wings and horrible figure of the fish, and grinding his teeth, "if he would come near enough to the surface, I should try a rifle ball in his head."

They broke one of the plates, and commenced to saw. Harold worked for half an hour, then gave it to Robert, who laboured faithfully. Had they been able to keep the link perfectly firm, and also to work all the time precisely on one spot, they might possibly have succeeded. But after two hours' hard work, the only result was that they had brightened one of the links by rubbing off the rust and a little of the metal.

"O, this will never, never do!" exclaimed Harold. "It will take us till midnight to saw through this chain, and then we shall be upon the broad sea, without any hope of returning home. Robert, I am done! My hands are blistered! My limbs are sore! I have done what I could! And now the Lord have mercy upon us!"

Up to that moment Harold had been the life and soul of the exertions made. His courage and energy had inspired the rest with confidence. But now that his strong spirit gave way, and he sunk upon his seat, and burst into tears, it seemed that all hope was gone. Robert threw down his piece of plate, and went to seat himself by Mary, in the hinder part of the boat. Frank had long since cried himself to sleep, and there he lay sobbing in his slumbers, with his head in Mary's lap. Mary was still pale from suffering and anxiety; having recovered by means of the water and fanning, she had summoned her fortitude and tried to comfort Frank with the hope that Harold and Robert would succeed in breaking the chain, and then that they would spread their beautiful sail, and return home. When Robert took his seat, Frank awakened, and asked for water.

"Sister Mary," said he, "where is father? I thought he was here."

"No, buddy," she replied, her eyes filling to think that he had awakened to so sad a reality, "father is at home."

"O, sister," said he, "I dreamed that father was with us, that he prayed to God to help us, and God made the fish let go, and we all went home. Brother Robert, have you broken that chain?"

This last appeal was too much for Robert's fortitude, tried already by repeated disappointments. He covered his face with his cap, and his whole body shook with emotion.

"Brother Robert," said Mary, speaking through her own tears, "you ought not to give up so. The fish is obliged to let go some time or other, and then may be some ship will pass by, and take us up. Remember how long people have floated upon broken pieces of a wreck, even without anything to eat, while we have plenty to eat for a month. Brother Robert and cousin Harold, do try to be comforted."

She obtained the water for Frank, and gave him something to eat. "Brother," she added, "you and cousin Harold have worked hard, and eaten nothing. Will you not take something? There are some nice cakes." Both declined. "Well, here is some water. I know you must be thirsty."

Harold was so much surprised to see a girl of Mary's age and gentle spirit exercising more self-control than himself, that he was shamed out of his despair. He did not then know that trait in the female character, which fits her to comfort when the stronger spirit has been overwhelmed. He drank a mouthful of the water. She handed it also to Robert, but he pushed it way, saying, "No, sister, I do not want anything now. We have done all that we could, and yet--."

"No, brother," she replied, "not at all. There is one thing more that you have not even tried to do; and that may help us more than anything else. It is to pray to God to help us."

"O, yes, brother," Frank added, "don't you recollect what father read to us out of the Bible, and talked to us about? What is it, sister?"

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Mary recited.

"Yes, brother," he continued, "remember that father prayed for us, when he saw us going off. And sister and I have been praying here, while you and cousin Harold were working yonder. Brother Robert, God *will* take care of us, if we pray to him."

"What Frank says is true, brother," said Mary. "He and I have been praying most of the time that you were working. And now see the difference! when you two have given up everything, he and I are quiet and hoping. Brother Robert, we all ought to pray."

"I do pray--I have prayed," replied Robert.

"That may be," persisted Mary, "but what I mean is, that we all ought to pray together."

"I cannot pray aloud," Robert answered; "I never did it. I do not know how to do it. But we can all kneel down together, and pray silently that God will have mercy on us. Harold, will you join us in kneeling down?"

As they were rising for this purpose, Frank called out, "Brother, what is that yonder? Isn't it a boat coming to meet us?"

Their eyes turned in the direction of Frank's finger and it was plain that a sail had heaved into the offing far away to the south, and almost in their course. The sun shone upon the snow-white canvas. "God be praised!" exclaimed Robert; "that is a vessel! Who knows but we may yet meet her, and be saved! Let us kneel down, and pray God to be merciful to us." They did so; and when they rose from their knees the vessel was evidently nearer.

"Let us try her with the spy glass," said Robert, and drawing it out to its proper length, he gazed steadily at her for a minute. "That is a schooner, or rather an hemaphrodite brig. I can see her sails and masts. She is rigged like a revenue cutter, and seems also to have the rake of one. She is coming this way, and if she is a cutter, she is almost certainly bound for Tampa, and can take us home again."

How rapidly characters appear to shift with shifting circumstances! Mary and Frank, who but a minute before were the only ones calm and disposed to speak in tones of energy and hope, now began to weep and lose all self-control; while Robert and Harold, shaking off their despondency, sprang to their feet, and with bright eyes and ready limbs, prepared once more for effort. Harold seized the glass, and looked long and steadily. "She is coming to us, or we are going to her very fast," said he. "Perhaps both; and now what shall we do?"

"Rig up a signal, and load the guns," replied Robert. "Let us attract their attention as soon as possible. Quick, sister, get me a sheet!"

In the course of fifteen minutes they had the sheet rigged and floating; and by the time the guns were loaded, they could clearly discern not only the hull, but the port holes of the vessel, and her long raking masts. There was no further doubt that she was a revenue cutter bound for the bay. Still it became every moment more certain that without some change in the course of one or the other, they must pass at a considerable distance. Now what should they do? The sky, which had been gradually clouding over since they saw the vessel, began to be rapidly and heavily overcast as they approached. Fearful that rain might fall, and utterly obscure their signal before it was seen, the boys resolved to fire their guns, ere there was any reasonable hope that they could be heard. At the first discharge the fish, which had probably been frightened in the morning by the cannon at the fort, jerked so terribly as almost to unseat them. At the discharge of the remaining guns it seemed less and less alarmed, until finally it ceased darting altogether; its

strength was failing. Soon afterwards they saw the smoke of two cannon from the vessel, and then a flag run up the mast. "They see us! They see us!" cried Robert and Mary.

"But can they help us?" asked Harold. "Here we are running between them and shore, faster than any vessel can sail except in a storm, and there is scarcely wind enough to fill their sails, and what there is is against their coming to our aid. Robert, we must break that chain, or yet all is lost."

There was apparently some bustle on board the cutter. Many persons could be distinguished by the glass looking at them and at the clouds. They were preparing to lower a boat, yet with manifest hesitation. This was immediately explained by the singular appearance of the cloud between the boat and the vessel. It had become exceedingly dark and angry. A portion in the middle assumed the shape of a trumpet, and descended with the sharp point toward the water; while a broad column ascended from the sea to meet it; and then sea and sky roared and tossed in terrible unison.

"It is a water-spout!" said Robert, "if it strikes the vessel she is gone. Look there, Harold, look!"

The cutter began to give sensible evidence of the whirling eddy. Her sails flapped and her masts reeled. Soon they heard boom! boom! the roar of two more cannon. They were for the purpose of breaking the threatening column. They saw the descending pillar gradually ascend, and spread itself into a dark mass of cloud, which poured out such a shower of rain as entirely to hide the vessel from sight. Afterwards they heard another cannon. "That is for us," Robert said; "let us answer it as well as we can."

They fired gun after gun, and heard cannon after cannon in reply, but each fainter than before. Their last hope of being saved by the vessel was gone. She was far away, and hidden by the rain which enveloped her. There had been no rain upon themselves, but it was very dark overhead, and threatened both rain and wind. They were far enough from home--how far they could not conceive, and far too from the barely visible shore, upon the broad wild sea. The boys were relapsing rapidly into that moody despair which is so natural after strong yet fruitless exertion, when a sharp flash of lightning struck in the water about one hundred yards before them. So near was it, and so severe, that they were almost blinded by the blaze, and stunned by the report. Their boat instantly relaxed its speed, and was soon motionless upon the water. The boys rushed to the bow. Their cable hung perpendicularly down, and the fish was nowhere to be seen. It had darted back from the lightning flash, and the cable had slipped quietly from its grasp.

"Thank God we are loose!" burst triumphantly from Robert. Harold looked on with strong emotion. Once more tears gathered in his eyes. "Robert," said he,

"I never did make pretension to being a Christian, or a praying person, but if we do not thank God all of us for this when we get ashore, we do not deserve to live."

"Amen!" said Robert; and Mary and Frank responded, "Amen!"

The shore was full seven miles away. It was probably wild and barren. It might be difficult of approach, and inhospitable after they should land. But gladly did they draw aboard their anchor, raise their sail, and make toward it. The sea was smooth, but there was wind enough to fill their sails, and give promise of their reaching the shore ere night. Robert took the helm, and Harold managed the sails. Mary once more brought out her cakes and other eatables. Frank laughed from very pleasure; and seldom, if ever, was a happier looking company to be seen, going to a strange and perhaps a hostile coast.

Far as the eye could reach, to the north and south, there was a bluff of white sand, varied here and there by a hillock, higher than the rest, which the winds had blown up from the beach. Before them was an inlet of some sort--whether a small bay, the mouth of a river, or an arm of the sea, they could not determine; it was fringed on the south with a richly coloured forest, and on the north by a growth of rank and nauseous mangroves. Into this inlet they steered, anxious only for a safe anchorage during the night. A little before sunset they reached a pleasant landing-place, on the southern shore, near the forest; and having been confined all day to the boat, they were glad enough to relieve themselves from their wearisome inaction, by a few minutes' exercise on land. Harold first ascended the bluff, and looked in every direction to see if there was any sign of inhabitants. No house or smoke was visible; nothing but an apparently untouched forest to the left, and a sandy, sterile country to the right.

"Cousins," said he, "I think we may with safety sleep on the beach tonight. With our dogs to guard, nothing can approach without our knowledge. I am almost afraid to anchor in the stream, lest we should be carried off by another devil-fish."

To this proposal they agreed. The tent was handily contrived, requiring only a few minutes for its erection; and while Mary and Frank drove down the tent-pins, Harold and Robert brought into it the cloaks and blankets for sleeping, together with their guns, and other necessaries for comfort and safety.

As the darkness closed around them, its gloom was relieved by the ruddy blaze of a fire, which Robert and Harold had made with dried branches from a fallen oak, and kindled by Frank's matches Mary soon had some tea prepared, which they found delightfully refreshing. Immediately after it, Harold, whose countenance ever since their escape from the fish had assumed a peculiarly thoughtful expression, remarked:

"I have no doubt we all remember what we said in the boat about being thankful; and I have no doubt that from the bottom of our hearts we do thank

God for our deliverance; but I think we ought to say so aloud together, and in our prayers, before we go to sleep this night."

No one answered, and he proceeded: "Robert, if you can speak for us, please say in our name what you know we ought to say."

There being still no reply, except a shake of Robert's head, Harold continued:

"Then we can at least kneel down together, and I will say, 'Thanks to the Lord for his mercies, and may we never forget them;' after which we can unite in the Lord's Prayer."

They knelt down. Harold did not confine himself to the words just recorded; he was much more full, and became more at ease with every word he uttered; and when the others united with him in repeating aloud the Lord's Prayer, as they had been accustomed to unite with their father in family worship, it was with an earnestness that they never felt before, and that was perceptible in every word and tone. That wild coast was probably for the first time hallowed with the voice of Christian prayer.

They made the boat secure by drawing the anchor well upon the beach. They spread their cloaks and blankets upon the dry sand, and lay down to rest. Their dogs kept watch at the door of their tent; and they slept soundly, and without the least disturbance, during the whole of this their first night of exile.

CHAPTER X

WAKING UP--GOOD RESOLUTIONS--ALARM--MAROONING BREAKFAST--SEARCH FOR WATER--UNEXPECTED GAIN--OYSTER BANK--FATE OF A RACCOON--THE PLUME AND FAN

Shortly after day-light Mary was awaked by feeling Frank put his arm round her neck. She opened her eyes, and seeing the white canvas overhead, started in surprise; then the fearful history of the preceding day rushed into her mind, and her heart beat fast at the recollection. She put her arm softly round Frank's neck, drew him near to her, and kissed him.

"Sister Mary," said he, awaking, "is this you? I thought it was father. Why, sister--what house is this! O, I remember, it is our tent."

Frank drew a long breath, nestled close to his sister, and laid his head on

her bosom. He seemed to be thinking painfully. After a minute or two he sprang to his feet, and began to dress. Peeping through the curtain that divided the two sleeping apartments, he said, "Brother and cousin Harold are sleeping yet, shall I wake them?"

"No, no," she replied. "They must be very weary after all their hard work and trouble. Let us just say our own prayers, and go out softly to look at the boat."

The first thing which greeted their eyes, on coming to the open air, was Nanny with her kids. The tide had gone down during the night, leaving the boat aground, and the hungry goat had taken that opportunity to jump out, with her little ones, and eat some fresh grass and leaves.

Mary's mind, as housekeeper, turned towards breakfast. She and Frank renewed the fire, the crackling and roar of which soon roused the others, who joined them, and then went to the boat to see that all was safe.

No change had occurred, other than has been noticed, except that the fulness of the dogs proved that they had fed heartily upon something during the night; and of course that they had proved unfaithful sentinels. The sight of the boat made them sad. It told of their distance from home, and of the dangers through which they had passed. For some minutes no one broke the silence; yet each knew instinctively the other's thoughts. Frank finally came near to Robert, and looking timidly into his face, said, "Brother, do you not think that father will send somebody after us?"

"Yes, indeed; if he only knew where to send," Robert replied in a soothing tone; "and more than that, I think he would come himself."

"I think he *will* send," said Frank; "for I remember that after he knelt down by the landing and prayed for us, he turned to the man on horse-back, and pointed to us; and then the man went back where he came from as hard as he could gallop."

"Well, buddy," returned Robert, "if father does not come after us, nor send for us, there is one thing we can do--try to get back to him. So there now"--he stooped down, and kissed him affectionately. Then he and Harold walked together on the beach.

During the whole morning, as on the preceding evening, Harold had been unusually grave and thoughtful. "Robert," he remarked, when they were beyond the hearing of the others, "I have been trying ever since we rose to think what we ought to do today; but my mind cannot fix on anything, except what we said yesterday about being thankful, and trying to do better. There is no telling how long it will be before we see Bellevue again, or what dangers we must meet. One thing, however, seems certain, that we ought to try and act like good Christian people; and that part of our duty is to have some kind of worship here, as we have been used to having at your father's."

Robert assented, but asked, "How can we do it? I am not accustomed to

conduct these things, nor are you."

"We can at least do this," replied Harold, whose mind was so deeply impressed with a sense of his obligations, that he was neither afraid nor ashamed of doing his duty. "We can read a chapter, verse about, morning and evening, and repeat the Lord's prayer together."

This was so easy, so natural, and so proper, that it was without hesitation agreed to. Mary and Frank were informed of it, and it was immediately put into practice. They gathered round the fire; and as the murmur of their prayer ascended from that solitary beach, the consciousness that this was *their own* act of worship, without the intervention of a minister, who is the priest of the sanctuary, or of a parent, who is the priest of the household, imparted a deep solemnity to their tones and feelings.

Scarcely had they risen from their knees, before Nanny and her kids were seen to run bleating down the bluff, while Mum and Fidelle, having rapidly ascended at the first alarm, gave signs of more than usual excitement. The boys hurried up the sandy steep, gun in hand, and looked in every direction. Nothing was to be seen, but Fidelle's tail was dropped with fear, and Mum's back was bristling with rage.

"What can be the matter with the dogs?" asked Robert.

"I do not know," Harold replied. "But we can soon find out. Here, Mum, hie on!"

He gave the sign of pursuit, and the two dogs ran together, and began barking furiously at something in an immense mossy live oak near at hand. The boys stood under the tree, and scrutinized every branch and mossy tuft, without discovering anything except a coal black squirrel, that lay flat upon a forked limb. "You foolish beasts!" exclaimed Harold, "did you never see a black squirrel before, that you should be so badly frightened at the sight of one?" then levelling his rifle at its head, he brought it down. It was very fat, having fed upon the sweet acorns of the live oak, and appeared also to be young and tender. Harold took it back to the tent, as an addition to their dinner, remarking, "It is the sweetest meat of the woods." All admired its glossy black skin, and Frank begged for the rich bushy tail, that he might wear it as a plume. This little diversion, though trifling in itself, exerted a very cheering effect upon the elastic spirits of the young people, and made them for a time forget their solitude and comparative helplessness. Had they known the country as well then as they had occasion to know it afterwards, they would not have felt so quiet, or have been so easily satisfied, when they saw the signs of alarm in their brutes.

When they sat down to their simple breakfast, it made Frank laugh to see how awkward everything appeared. There was no table, and of course there were no chairs. All sat on their heels, except Mary, who being the lady was dignified

with a seat upon a log, covered with a folded cloak. It was a regular marooning breakfast.

"I think that our first business this morning is to look for water," remarked Harold, while they were sitting together. "The goat seems to be very thirsty, and, as our jug is half empty, it will not be long before we shall be thirsty too. But how shall we manage our company? Shall Mary and Frank continue at the tent, or shall we all go together?"

"O together, by all means," said Mary, speaking quickly. "I do not like the way those dogs looked before breakfast; they frightened me. There may not be anything here to hurt us, but if there should be, what could Frank and I do to help ourselves?"

"Then together let us go," Robert decided. "And Frank, as you have nothing else to do, we will make you *dipper master*."

They ascended the bluff, and looked in every direction, to ascertain if possible where they might obtain what they wished; but nowhere could they discern the first sign or promise of water. Far to the south as the eye could reach, the country looked dry and sandy. Eastward extended the river, or arm of the sea, but it appeared to have no current, other than the daily tides, and its shore gave no indication of being indented by rivulets, or even by the rains.

"It will put us to great inconvenience if we are not able to obtain fresh water," remarked Harold. "We shall be compelled to move our quarters without delay, for our supply cannot last long. However, there is no such thing as not trying. Which way shall we move?"

"Towards the sea," replied Robert. "There is one fact about a sandy coast, that perhaps you have had no occasion to know--that *oftentimes our best water is found on the open beach, just about high-water mark*. I have heard father explain this fact by saying that rain water is lighter than that which is salt; and that the rain probably filters through the sandy soil of the coast, and finds its vent just above the ordinary surface of the sea. I think, therefore, our best chance for finding fresh water is on the seashore, in the sand."

They had not proceeded far along the bluff before they heard a loud rushing in the air, and looking up they saw what Mary and Frank supposed to be a gang of enormously large buzzards, flying rapidly towards the forest, and passing very near them. "What can they be!" inquired Robert, in momentary doubt. "Really, Harold, they are turkeys! wild turkeys!"

But as he uttered the words "wild turkeys," bang! went Harold's rifle, and down fluttered a gobler, with his wing broken. "Here, Mum!" he shouted; but Mum knew his business too well to need exhortation, for by the time the bird had scrambled to its legs Mum had seized and held it, until Harold put an end to its struggles by cutting off its head.

"Here now is a fine dinner," said he, lifting it, "only feel how heavy; he is rolling fat."

"Yes, indeed," replied Robert; "and that was a quick shot of yours, Mr. Harold--with a rifle too. I wonder I did not think sooner of shooting; but in truth I was in doubt what they were, and also astonished at their number."

"What a lovely fan his tail will make!" exclaimed Mary, examining the rich stripes of black and brown that marked the end of the feathers. "We must be sure to carry it home for--," she was going to say "mother when she comes," but the thought of their forlorn condition came over her, and she added softly--"if we ever get there."

"Let us leave the turkey, hanging in this tree to bleed, until we return," said Harold; "we must look for water now."

They returned to the beach, and walked along the smooth hard sands. The tide, or rather "half tide" (as it is called on that coast), having an ebb and flow, each of three hours, was nearly down, and they had a full opportunity for the proposed search.

"There is water somewhere here about, you may be sure," said Harold, pointing to tracks of the dogs, made during the night, and partly obliterated by the tide. "Our dogs passed here last night before high water, and they look as if they had had plenty both to eat and to drink."

A quarter of a mile's walk brought them to a place, when Robert called out, "Here is the water! and here are our dogs' tracks, all about and in it. Get out you Mum!--begone Fidelle!" he added, as the dogs trotted up, intending to drink again. The water was good, and in great abundance. They quenched their thirst, and were preparing to return for the bucket to carry home a supply, when Harold suggested to pursue the tracks of the dogs a little further, and learn what they had obtained to eat. "I perceive not far off," said he, "what appears to be an oyster bank, but do dogs eat oysters?"

They proceeded to the spot, and found a large bank of uncommonly fine oysters. It was an easy task for those who knew how to manage it, to break the mouth of one with another and to cut the binding muscle with a pocket-knife. Harold shrunk aghast at the idea of eating an oyster alive; but Robert's example was contagious, and the assurance that this primitive mode of eating them was the most delicious, sufficed to make every one adopt it. Engaged in selecting some of the finest specimens to carry back, the others heard Frank call out, in one of his peculiarly merry exclamations:

"Ohdy! dody! Look here! There is a big, black cat's foot in this oyster's mouth. I wonder if the cat bit off his own foot!"

They hurried to the spot, Mary and Harold laughing at the odd fancy, as they esteemed it, of a cat biting off its own foot, and saw, not a cat's foot indeed,

but that of a raccoon, firmly fastened in the oyster's mouth.

"What does this mean?" Harold inquired, with wonder.

"Why, Harold," replied Robert, "did you never hear of a raccoon being caught by an oyster?"

"Never," he answered; "but are you in earnest?"

"Certainly, in earnest as to there being such a report," he replied, "and this I suppose is proof of its truth. It is said that the raccoon is very fond of oysters, and that when they open their mouths, at a certain time of tide, to feed upon the scum of the water, it slips its paw suddenly between the shells, and snatches out the oyster before it has time to close. Sometimes, however, the raccoon is not quick enough, and is consequently caught by the closing shells. Such was probably the case with this fellow; he came to the bank last night to make a meal of the oysters, but was held fast until our dogs came up and made a meal of him."

"But I doubt," said Harold, "whether dogs ever eat raccoons. They will hunt and worry them as they do cats and other animals, which they never eat, at least never except in extremity."

"Then I suppose," added Robert, "we must account for this by another story which is told, that a raccoon, when driven to the necessity, will actually gnaw off its own foot."

"Really," said Harold, "this is a curiosity. I must take this oyster to the tent, and examine it more at my leisure."

The young people gathered as many oysters as they could carry in their hands, and reaching the tent about ten o'clock, began preparing them, together with their game, for the table. Robert cut off the squirrel's tail for Frank; and having drawn out the bone, without breaking the skin, inserted a tough, slender stick, so that when it was properly dried, Frank might use it as a plume. The preparation of the turkey's tail was undertaken by Harold. He cut off the tail-bone, with the feathers attached, and having removed every particle of flesh and cartilage not necessary for keeping the feathers together, he stretched it like a fan, and spread it in the ran to dry.

CHAPTER XI

DISCUSSION OF PLANS--DOUBTS--DIFFERENCES OF OPINION--WHAT WAS AGREED UPON--BAKING A TURKEY WITHOUT AN OVEN--FLYING SIGNAL

"Really this is a fine country!" said Robert, referring, with the air of a feasted epicure, to the abundant marooning dinner from which he had risen. "Wild turkey, squirrel, and oysters! I doubt whether our old friend Robinson Crusoe himself fared better than we."

"It is a fine place indeed," Harold replied; "and so long as our powder and shot last, we might live like princes. But, Robert," he continued, "it is time that we begin to determine our plan of operations. What shall we do?"

"Do!" echoed Robert, "why return home as soon as possible. What else have we to do?"

"To determine how we are to return and in what direction."

"Then I say," Robert replied, "the same way that we came, only a little nearer shore."

"But who can tell me the course?" Harold asked.

"Yonder," replied Frank, pointing to the sea.

"No, buddy," said Robert, "that is only our *last* course; we came in from sea. Home is yonder," pointing nearly north.

"Now, I think you are both wrong," said Harold, "for according to my judgment home is yonder," pointing nearly east. "At least, I recollect that when I was working at the chain the sun was behind us, for my shadow fell in the water, and I do not recollect that we have changed our course since. So far as I know we started west, and kept west."

"That would have carried us into the open gulf," returned Robert.

"And that is exactly where I think we are," Harold affirmed.

"But there are no islands in the gulf," argued Robert, "nor land either, after you leave Tampa, until you reach Mexico. And we are surely not in Mexico."

"I do not know where we are," said his cousin. "I only know that we left home with our faces to the west, and that the water kept boiling under our bow for ten long hours. How fast we went, or what land we have reached, I know no more than Frank does."

"But we saw islands and points of land to our left," Robert insisted; "it is *impossible* for us to be in the gulf."

"Then where do you suppose we are!"

"On the coast of Florida, to the south of Tampa. There is no other place within reach, answering the description."

"But how do you know we are not on some island?"

"We may be on an island; but if so, it is still on the Florida coast," Robert replied, "for there are no islands beside these, nearer than the West Indies, and we are surely not on any of them."

Harold shook his head. "I cannot answer your reasoning, for you are a better scholar than I. We may be where you suppose; and I confess that without your

superior knowledge of geography I should never have conceived it; but still my impression is, that neither of us know well enough where we are to warrant our going far from land. A voyage in an open boat upon a rough sea is no trifle. I am afraid of it. Put me on land, and I will promise to do as much as any other boy of my age; but put me on sea, out of sight of land, and I am a coward, because I know neither where I am, nor what to do."

"But what shall we do?" Robert inquired; "we cannot stay here for ever."

"No; but we can remain here, or somewhere else as safe, until we better understand our case," answered Harold. "And who knows but in the meantime some vessel may pass and take us home. One passed on yesterday."

Robert mused awhile, and replied, "I believe you are right as to the propriety of our waiting. Father will certainly set all hands to work to search for us. The vessel we saw yesterday will no doubt carry to him the news of their seeing us going in a certain direction at a certain time. He will be sure to search for us somewhere in this neighbourhood; and we had better on that account not move far away."

Mary and Frank were attentive, though silent listeners to this colloquy. Mary's colour went and came with every variation in their prospect of an immediate return. She was anxious, principally, on her father's account. Her affectionate heart mourned over the distress which she knew he must then be feeling; but when she came to reflect on the uncertainty of their position, and the danger of a voyage, and also that her father had probably ere this heard of them through the cutter, she was satisfied to remain. Poor Frank cried bitterly, when he first learnt that they were not to return immediately; but his cheerful nature soon rebounded, and a few words of comfort and hope were sufficient to make him picture to himself a beautiful vessel, with his father on board, sailing into their quiet river, and come for the purpose of taking them all home.

"Before we conclude on remaining *here*," said Harold. "I think it will be best for us to sail around the island, if it is one, and see what sort of a place it is."

This precaution was so just that it received their immediate assent. They fixed upon the next morning as the time for their departure; and not knowing how far they should go, or how long they might stay, they concluded to take with them all that they had.

"But," inquired Mary, "what shall we do with our large fat turkey?" (a part of it only having been prepared for the table); "shall we cook it here, or carry it raw?"

"Let us cook it here," said Harold; "I will show you how to bake it, Indian fashion, without an oven."

Among the articles put up by William were a spade and a hoe. With these Harold dug a hole in the dryest part of the beach; and, at his request, Robert took

Mary and Frank to the tree above, and brought down a supply of small wood. The hole was two and a-half feet deep and long, and a foot and a-half wide, looking very much like a baby's grave. Frank looked archly at his cousin, and asked if he was going to have a *funeral*, now that he had a grave. "Yes," replied Harold, "a merry one." The wood was cut quite short, and the hole was heaped full; and the pile being set to burning at the top, Harold said,

"There is another little piece of work to be done, which did not occur to me until digging that hole. It is to set up a signal on the beach to attract attention from sea."

"I wonder we did not think of that before," remarked Robert. "It would certainly have been an unpardonable oversight to have left the coast, as we expect to do tomorrow, without leaving something to show that we are here, or in the neighbourhood."

The boys went to the grove, and cutting a long straight pole, brought it to the tent, and made fast to it the sheet which before had served them as a signal; after which the company went together to the sea shore, and planted the signal under the bluff, so that it could be distinctly seen from sea, but would be hidden from the land. This place was selected for the same reason that induced Harold to build his fire under the bluff--to avoid hostile observation. The young people looked up sadly yet hopefully to this silent watchman, which was to tell their coming friends that they were expected; and with many an unuttered wish turned their faces towards the tent.

[image]

The company went together to the sea shore and planted the signal

The fire in the oven had by this time burnt down, but by reason of the dampness of the earth the hole was not hot enough. Another supply of wood was put in, and while it was burning our young marooners went to the oyster bank for another supply of oysters, then to the spring for water, and to the tree for wood. The labours of life were coming upon them.

A sufficient heat having been produced by the second fire, Harold requested Robert to clear the hole of all ashes, smoking brands, and unburnt bits of wood, while he went once more to the grove. He returned with a clean white stick, about a yard long, which he used as a spit for the turkey, resting the two ends in holes made at each end of the oven.

It was now nearly dark. The little company stood around the heated hole, admiring the simple contrivance by which their wild turkey was to be so nicely

cooked, when, to the surprise of every one, Mary burst into a hearty laugh. Harold asked what she meant.

"I was thinking," she replied, almost choking with laughter, "how funny it will be tomorrow morning when you visit your grave, and come to take out your nice baked turkey, to find that the dogs had been to the funeral before you."

"That is a fact," said Harold, amused at the conceit. "I did not think of the dogs. But do you all come with me again for a few minutes, and I will make the oven secure from that danger also."

He led the way up the bluff, hatchet in hand, and loaded all with small poles and palmetto leaves. The poles were laid across the oven, and the palmetto leaves spread thickly above the poles. "I had forgotten this part of the ceremony," said Harold. "But this cover is put on not so much to keep the dogs out as to keep the heat in. I will show you at bed time a surer way to manage them."

"O, you will tie them up, hey?" asked Harry.

"Surely," he replied, "that is the cheapest way to keep dogs from mischief."

Buried almost hermetically in its heated cell, the turkey seasoned to their taste, was left to its fate for the night.

CHAPTER XII

RESULTS OF THE COOKERY--VOYAGE--APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRY--ORANGE TREES--THE BITTER SWEET--RATTLESNAKE--USUAL SIGNS FOR DISTINGUISHING A FANGED AND POISONOUS SERPENT--VARIOUS METHODS OF TREATING A SNAKE BITE--RETURN

The morning sun found the young people preparing to carry their resolution into effect. When Harold opened the oven the turkey was baked brown as a nut, and from the now tepid hole arose an odour, so tempting, that their appetites began to clamour for an enjoyment that was not long delayed.

After breakfast the first work to be done was packing the boat, during which time Harold, at the suggestion of Robert, took Frank, and made a short tour through the surrounding forest, for the purpose of obtaining a breakfast for the dogs. The bark of the dogs and crack of a rifle soon announced that the hunters were successful, and in less than half an hour they returned each with a rabbit, as we Americans call the hare. "See here, brother Robert! See here, sister Mary!"

was the merry chatter of Frank, the moment he came near. "I caught this myself. Fidelle ran it into a hollow tree--he is a fine rabbit dog. Mum is good for nothing; he will not run rabbits at all, but just stood and looked at us while Fidelle was after it. Cousin Harold would not let me smoke out the rabbit, but showed me how to get it with a switch. Isn't it a nice fellow?"

"It is indeed," replied Robert, "and I think that before we can return home, you will make an excellent *supercargo*."

Scarcely a smile followed this allusion; it was too sadly associated with the painful events of their forced departure from home. The packing completed, they called in the dogs and goats, pushed from shore, raised their sails to a favourable breeze, and moved gaily up the river.

For a mile and a half the water over which they sailed, lay in a straight reach, due east and west, then turned rapidly round to the north, where its course could be traced for many a mile by the breaks among the mangroves. Just where the river made its turn to the north, a small creek opened into it from the south. The course of this creek was very serpentine; for a considerable distance hugging the shore in a close embrace, then running off for a quarter or half a mile, and after enclosing many hundred acres of marsh, returning to the land, within a stone's throw of the place which it had left.

As the object of the voyagers was to explore the land, they turned into this creek, which seemed to form the eastern boundary of the island. They observed that the vegetation which was very scant and small near the sea, increased rapidly in variety and luxuriance as they proceeded inland. Tall palmettoes, pines, hickories, oaks, tulip trees, magnolias, gums, bays, and cypresses, reared aloft their gigantic forms, their bases being concealed by myrtles, scarlet berried cascenas, dwarf palmettoes, gallberries, and other bushes, intermingled with bowers of yellow jessamine, grape-vine, and chainy brier; while a rich grass, dotted with variously coloured flowers, spread like a gorgeous carpet beneath the magnificent canopy. Some of the flowers that glistened, even at this late season, above the floor of this great Gothic temple, were strikingly beautiful.

For five miles they followed the meanderings of the creek, now rowing, now sailing, until at last it turned suddenly to the east, and dividing into a multitude of small innavigable branches became lost in the marshes beyond. Fortunately, however, for the explorers, the channel terminated at an excellent landing-place, which was made firm by sand and shells, and where, securing their boat to a projecting root, they went ashore to examine the character of the country. To their surprise they had not proceeded twenty paces before discovering that this piece of land was only a narrow tongue, not a half furlong wide, and that beyond it was a river in all respects like the one they had left, coming also close to the opposite bank, and making a good landing on that side.

"O, for strength to lift our boat over this portage!" exclaimed Robert. "The river, no doubt, sweeps far around, and comes back to this point, making this an island."

"We can settle that question tomorrow," said Harold. "It is too late to attempt it now."

"O, brother," cried Mary, "there is an orange tree--look! look! look!--full of ripe yellow oranges."

It was a beautiful tree, and not one only, but a cluster of seven, scattered in a kind of grove, and loaded with fruit, in that state of half ripeness in which the dark green of the rind shows in striking contrast with the rich colour called orange. The young people threshed down several of the ripest, and began to eat, having first forced their fingers under the skin, and peeled it off by patches. But scarcely had they tasted the juicy pulp, before each made an exceeding wry face, and dashed the deceptive fruits away, as if they had been apples of Sodom, beautiful without, but ashes within. The orange was of the kind called the "bitter sweet," having the bitter rind and membranes of the sour, with the pleasant juice of the sweet.

"Open the plugs, all of you, and eat it as you do the shaddock, without touching the skin to your lips," said Robert. "There is nothing bitter in the *juice*, I recollect now that this kind of orange is said to grow plentifully in many parts of South Florida, and also that the lime is apt to be found in its company. This is another proof, Harold, that I am right as to our whereabouts."

"Really," said Harold, "this is a splendid country. I have another fact about it that you will be glad to learn, and that I intended as a pleasant surprise to you ere long. There are plenty of *deer* here. I saw their signs all through the woods this morning, within a quarter of a mile of the tent."

They gathered about a bushel of the ripest looking of the fruit, and deposited them in the boat; then beginning to feel hungry, they seated themselves on a green mound of velvet-like moss at the foot of a spreading magnolia, and there dined. Nanny and her kids were already on shore, cropping the rich grass, and the dogs were made happy with the remaining rabbit.

Shortly after dinner, while the boys were cutting a supply of grass for their goats during the voyage of the following day, they heard the bark of Fidelle and the growling of Mum, uttered in such decided and angry tones as to prove that they had something at bay, with which they were particularly displeased. "One of us ought to go and see what those dogs are about," remarked Robert; "and since you took your turn this morning, I presume it is my business now." He had not gone long, before Harold saw him returning with rapid steps.

"Do come here, cousin," said he, "there is the largest king-snake I ever saw, and desperately angry. The dogs have driven him into a thicket of briers, and he is fighting as if he had the venom of a thousand serpents in his fangs. His eyes

actually flash. I cut a stick and tried to kill him, but it was too short, and he struck at me so venomously, that I concluded to cut me a longer one. The most curious part of the business is, that there is a large grasshopper or locust (if I may judge from the sound), in the same thicket, making himself very merry with the fight. There he is now--do you not hear him? singing away as if he would crack his sides."

"Locust!" exclaimed Harold, as soon as his quick ear distinguished the character of the music, "you do not call that a locust. Why, Robert, it is the rattle of a rattle-snake. Did you never hear one before?"

"Never in my life," he replied. "I have often seen their skins and rattles, but never a live rattle-snake. O, Harold," he said, shuddering, "what a narrow escape I have made. That fellow struck so near me twice, as barely to miss my clothes."

The boys obtained each a pole of ten feet in length. They stood on opposite sides of the narrow thicket in which the venomous reptile was making its defence, and as it moved, in striking, to the one side or the other, they aimed their blows, until it was stunned by a fortunate stroke from Robert, and fell writhing amid the leaves and herbage. The moment the blow took effect, Mum, whose eyes were lighted with fiery eagerness, sprang upon the body, seized it by the middle, shook it violently, then dropped and shook it again. It was now perfectly dead. They drew it out, and stretched it on the ground. Its body was longer than either of theirs, and as large around as Robert's leg. The fangs, which he shuddered to behold, were half as long as his finger, and crooked, like the nails of a cat, and the rattles were sixteen in number.

"This is an old soldier," said Harold; "he is seventeen or eighteen years of age. Had we not better carry it to the boat that Mary and Frank may see it? It is well for all to be able to distinguish a rattle-snake when it is met."

The precaution was necessary. For though Mary had a salutary fear of all reptiles, Frank had not; he would as soon have played with a snake, as with a lizard or a worm; and these last he would oftentimes hold in his hand, admiring what he considered their beauty. They stretched it on the earth before the children; put it into its coil ready for striking; opened its mouth; showed the horrid fangs; and squeezing the poison bag, forced a drop of the green liquid to the end of the tooth.

"Frank," said Harold, "if you meet a snake like this, you had better let him alone. Rattle-snakes never run at people. They are very peaceable and only trouble those that trouble them. But they will not budge out of their way for a king; and if you wrong them, they will give you the point of their fangs, and a drop of their poison, and then you will swell up and die. Do you think that you will play with snakes any more!"

"No, indeed," he replied.

"Harold," said Robert, "do you know how to distinguish a poisonous snake

from a harmless one?"

On his replying in the negative, Robert continued, "The poisonous serpents, I am told, may be usually known by their having broad angular heads, and short stumpy tails. That rattlesnake answers exactly to the description, and I wonder at myself for not having put my knowledge to better use when I met him. The only exception to this rule I know of is the spreading adder, which is of the same shape, but harmless. Poisonous serpents must have fangs, and a poison bag. These must be somewhere in the head, without being part of the jaws themselves. This addition to the head gives to it a broad corner on each side, different from that of a snake which has no fangs. But *if ever you see a thick set snake with a broad head and a short stumpy tail, take care*."

The conversation now turned upon the subject of snake-bites and their cure. "My father," said Harold, "had two negroes bitten during one summer by highland moccasins, and each was cured by a very simple remedy. In the first case the accident happened near the house, and my father was in the field. He sent a runner home for a pint bottle of sweet oil, and made him drink by little and little the whole. Beside this there was nothing done, and the negro recovered. The other case was more singular. Father was absent, and there was no oil to be had, but the overseer cured the fellow *with chickens*."

"Chickens!" exclaimed Mary, laughing. "Did he make him take them the same way?"

"Not exactly," Harold answered; "he used them as a sort of poultice. He ordered a number of half grown fowls to be split open alive, by cutting them through the back, and applied them warm to the wound. Before the first chicken was cold, he applied another, and another, until he had used a dozen. He said that the warm entrails sucked out the poison. Whether or not this was the true reason, the negro became immediately better; and it was surprising to see how green the inside of the first few chickens looked, after they had lain for a little while on the wound."

"*We* also had a negro bitten by a ground rattle," said Robert, "and father cured him by using hartshorn and brandy, together with an empty bottle."

Harold looked rather surprised to hear of the empty bottle, and Robert said, "O, that was used only as a cupping-glass. Hot water was poured in, and then poured out, and as the air within cooled, it made the bottle suck very strongly on the wound, to which it was applied, and which father had opened more widely by his lancet. While this operation was going on, father made the fellow drink brandy enough to intoxicate him, saying that this was the only occasion in which he thought it was right to make a person drunk. The hartshorn, by-the-by, was used on another occasion, when there was neither a bottle nor spirit to be had. It was applied freely to the wound itself, and also administered by a quarter of

a teaspoonful at a time in water, until the person had taken six or eight doses. I recollect hearing father say that all animal poisons are regarded as *intense acids*, for which the best antidotes are alkalies, such as hartshorn, soda saleratus, and even strong lye."

"Last year," said Harold, "I was myself bitten by a water-moccasin. I was far from home, and had no one to help me; but I succeeded in curing myself, without help."

"Indeed! how was it?"

"I had gone to a mill-pond to bathe, and was in the act of leaping into the water, when I trod upon one that lay asleep at the water's edge. Although it is more than a year since, I have the feeling under my foot at this moment as he twisted over and struck me. Fortunately his fangs did not sink very deep, but there was a gash at the joint of my great toe, of at least half an inch long. I knew in a moment that I was bitten, and as quickly recollected hearing old Torgah say, that the Indian cure for a bite is to lay upon the wound the liver of the snake that makes it. But I suppose that my snake had no notion of being made into a poultice for his own bite; for though I chased him, and tried hard to get his liver, he ran under a log and escaped. Very likely if I had succeeded in killing him, I might have relied upon the Indian cure and been disappointed. As it was, I jumped into the water, washed out the poison as thoroughly as possible, and having made my foot perfectly clean, I sucked the wound until the blood ceased to flow."

"And did not the poison make you at all sick?"

"Not in the least. My foot swelled a little, and at first stung a great deal. But that was the end of it. I was careful to swallow none of the blood, and to wash my mouth well after the sucking."

"Do, if you please, stop talking about snakes," said Mary, "I begin to see them wherever I look; suppose we return to our old encampment."

The boys gathered the remainder of the hay, called Nanny and the dogs, and reached the place which they had left, about five o'clock in the afternoon--having seen no signs of human habitation, and being exceedingly pleased with the appearance of their island; they made a slight alteration, however, in the place of their tent. Instead of continuing on the beach, they pitched it upon the bluff near the spring, and under the branches of a large mossy live oak. By the time the duties of the evening were concluded, they were ready for sleep. They committed themselves once more to the care of Him who has promised to be the Father of the fatherless, and laid down in peace, to rest during their third night upon the

island.

CHAPTER XIII

DISAPPOINTMENT--THE LIVE OAK--UNLOADING--FISHING EXCURSION--HAROLD'S STILL HUNT--DISAGREEABLE MEANS TO AN AGREEABLE END

Before sunrise it was manifest that, without a change in the wind, the excursion proposed for that day was impossible; a strong breeze was blowing directly from the east, and brought a ceaseless succession of mimic billows down the river. Hoping, however, that the wind might change or moderate, they resolved to employ the interval in transferring all their articles of value from the boat, to their new home under the oak. And it was indeed fortunate, as they afterwards had occasion to know, that they attended to this duty so soon.

The live oak, under which their tent was pitched, was a magnificent tree. Its trunk was partially decayed from age, and the signs of similar decay in many of the larger limbs was no doubt the cause of its being spared in the universal search along this coast for ship timber; but it was so large, that the four youngsters by joining hands could barely reach around it. Ten feet above the root, it divided into three massive branches, which in turn were subdivided into long pendant boughs extending about sixty feet in every direction, and showing, at their ends, a strong disposition to sweep the ground. The height of the tree did not correspond to its breadth. It is characteristic of the live oak that, after attaining the moderate height of forty or fifty feet, its growth is directed laterally; the older trees often covering an area of more than double their height. Every limb was hung so plentifully with long gray moss, as to give it a strikingly venerable and patriarchal aspect, and Harold declared he could scarcely look at it without a disposition to take off his hat.

At noon Harold proposed to Robert that, the wind having ceased, they should spend the afternoon either in hunting or fishing. "If," said he, "Mary and Frank will allow us to leave them, I propose the first; if not, I propose the last, in which all can join."

"O, let us go together, by all means," said Mary. "I do not like to be left alone in this far off place; something may happen."

"Then let it be fishing," said Harold; "but what shall we use for bait?"

"The old bait that our grandfathers used--shrimp," replied Robert. "I observed on yesterday a multitude of them in a nook of the creek near the river. We can first catch some of these with our scoop net, and then try for whatever may bite. At any rate we can take the offals of the turkey, and fish for crabs."

However, on ascending the river in their boat, and making the trial, they found that the shrimp had disappeared, and they were left with only six or seven caught at a venture.

"This is a dull prospect," said Harold, whose active nature made him impatient of fishing as an amusement, unless the success was unusually good. "If you will allow me to go ashore I will try my luck with the gun."

"Certainly, certainly," was the reply; though Robert added, "You must remember that this is a wild country, Harold, and that we had better keep within hearing at least of each other's guns."

Harold promised not to wander beyond the appointed limit; and each agreed that if help were needed, two guns should be fired in quick succession.

"Will you not take my double barrel?" said Robert. "It is loaded with duck and squirrel shot, but you can easily draw and load for deer."

"I thank you, no," replied Harold. "It is so long since I have handled anything but a rifle, that a smooth bore now would be awkward."

They put him ashore, then dropped anchor, and began to fish. Mary and Frank had been long initiated into the mysteries of the art. On the present occasion, Robert reserved to himself the shrimp, and set them to the easier task of fishing for crabs. For security he tied the lines to the thowl pins. Crabs, as all upon the seaboard well know, are not caught with hooks, but with bait either hooked or tied to a lie, and with a spoon-shaped net. The crab takes hold of the bait with its claws, and is drawn to the surface, when the net is carefully introduced below. Robert inserted his own hook through the back of a live silver fish, and threw it in the water as a bait for drum. Soon Mary was seen drawing up her line, which she said was very heavy. "There is a crab on it, brother!" she cried, as it approached the surface; "two crabs! two! two!" Robert was near her. He inserted the net below, and the two captives were soon in the boat. "Well done for you, Miss Mary; you have beat us all!"

Here Frank called out suddenly, "I have got one too! O, how heavy he is! Brother, come; he is pulling my line away!"

It was not a crab. Robert and he pulled together, and after considerable play, they found that it was an enormous cat-fish or bull-head.

"This fellow will make a capital stew for tomorrow's dinner," said Robert. "But hold to your line, Frank, while I put the net under him also. I am afraid of these terrible side fins."

The fish had scarcely been raised over the gunwale of the boat, with the remark, "that is a bouncer!" when Robert noticed his own line fizzing through the water at a rapid rate. He quickly loosed it from the place where it was tied, and payed out yard after yard as the vigorous fish darted and struggled away; then humouring its motion by giving or taking the line as seemed to be necessary, he at last drew it towards him, and took it aboard. It was a drum, the largest he had ever caught, or indeed ever seen. It was as long as his arm, and strong enough to require all his art for its capture.

He loosed the hooks from the floundering fishes, and tried for more. But they now seemed slow to bite. He took only two others, and they were small. Mary, however, caught nine crabs, and Frank two. Becoming weary of the sport, they heard afar off the sharp crack of a rifle.

"There goes Harold's rifle!" said Robert; "and I warrant something has seen its last of the sun. Let us put up our lines, and meet him at the tent."

The anchor was weighed, the sail spread, and in the course of half an hour they saw Harold at the landing.

"What have you brought?" they all asked.

"O, nothing--nothing at all," he replied, looking at the same time much pleased.

"Nothing!" responded Robert. "Why we paid you the compliment of saying, 'There goes Harold's rifle! and you may be sure he has killed something."

"If *you* have not anything, *we have*," boasted Frank. "See what a big fish I caught! Isn't it a bouncer for a little fellow like me to catch? Why, sir, he nearly pulled me into the water; but I pulled and pulled, and brother Robert came to help me, and we both pulled, and got him in. See, too, what brother Robert caught--a big trout; and sister Mary, she caught a parcel of crabs; I caught two crabs myself. And you haven't anything! Why, cousin Harold, are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"But you have killed something; I see it in your looks," said Mary, scrutinizing his countenance; "what is it?"

"That is another question," replied Harold. "You all asked me at first what I had brought. Now, I *have brought* nothing; but I have *to bring* a deer."

"Then, indeed, you have beat us," said Robert; "but that is only what I expected."

"A deer!" exclaimed the two younger. "O, take us to see it!"

Mooring the boat safely, they hastened with Harold to the scene of slaughter. It was about half a mile distant. There lay a large fat buck, with branching horns, and sleek brown sides. Frank threw himself upon it in an ecstasy of delight; patted, hugged, and almost kissed it. Mary hung back, shrinking from the sight of blood.

"O, cousin Harold," she cried, "what a terrible gash your bullet has made in the poor thing's throat! Just look there!"

Harold laughed. "That was not made by my ball, but by my knife. Hunters always bleed their game, cousin, or it will not look so white, taste so sweet, nor keep so well."

The boys prepared to carry it home. Harold, taking from his bosom the hatchet, cut a long stout pole, and Robert brought some leaves of the silk grass (the yucca filamentosa, whose long narrow leaves are strong as cords), with which the legs of the deer were tied together. Swinging it on the pole between them, they marched homewards.

By this afternoon's excursion they were provided with a delightful supply of fish, crabs, and venison. But, alas! they were compelled to be their own butchers and cooks; and there are certain processes through which these delicacies must pass before being ready for the mouth that are not so agreeable. Mary and Frank brought up the fish, and set about preparing them for supper. They laid each upon a flat root of the tree, and with a knife scraped off the scales. This was dirty work for a nice young lady, but it was necessary to the desired end. She pshawed and pshawed at it as the slimy scales adhered to her fingers, or flew into her face, but she persevered until all was done.

In the meantime the fire had been mended, and water poured into their largest pot. When it began to boil, Mary and Frank dropped in the crabs. Poor creatures! it was a warm reception they met with from their native element. Each one gave a kick at the unwelcome sensation, and then sunk into quiet repose, at the bottom of its iron sepulchre. They remained boiling until their shells were perfectly red, when they were taken out, and piled in a dish for supper.

CHAPTER XIV

FRANK'S EXCUSES--CURING VENISON--MAROONING COOKERY--ROBERT'S VEGETABLE GARDEN--PLANS FOR RETURN---PREPARATION FOR THE SABBATH

When Mary and Frank arose next morning, they saw the small boughs of the oak hung with divided portions of venison. The boys had so placed them, after

finishing, late at night, for the double purpose of allowing them to cool and of keeping them out of reach of the dogs. "Come, Frank," said Mary, "let us make up the fire, and get things ready for breakfast." The wood was close at hand, ready cut, and nothing more was needed for a fire than putting the pieces together, with several sticks of light wood underneath; a bright cracking blaze soon rose cheerfully before them.

"Buddy," she said, "can you not go down to the spring, and bring me some water, while I am preparing these other things?"

But Frank was lazy that morning, and out of humour, and the fire was so comfortable (for the air was cool) that he stood before it, warming his hands, and puffing at the smoke that blew in his face. He replied, "No, sister, I am afraid"--then he paused, trying hard to think of some excuse. "I am afraid that if I go the crabs will bite me."

"Crabs!" Mary exclaimed. "Why how can they bite you, when they are all cooked?"

"I do not mean the crabs in the dish," said he, "but the crabs in the river."

"Well, if they are in the river," argued Mary, "how can they hurt you, if you keep on the land?"

Frank found that his excuse was about to fail. But he was not disposed to surrender so easily. He therefore devised another. "I am afraid to go, for if the crabs do not bite me maybe the snakes will. Don't you remember what cousin Harold told us the other day about snakes."

Frank said this very seriously, and had not Mary been somewhat provoked at his unbrotherly refusal, she would have laughed at the ridiculous contrast between his looks and his language. She said, reproachfully, "I thought, Frank, you loved me better than to treat me so. I want the water to make coffee for you, and the rest of us, and yet you will not help me."

"I do not wish any of the coffee," he answered. "All that I want for breakfast is some of that nice fat deer, and some of these fish and crabs."

"Very well," she added, in a hurt but independent tone, "I can help myself."

She took the bucket, and went to the spring. Frank looked ashamed, but continued silent. He drew up a billet of wood and sat upon it, pushing his feet towards the fire, and spreading out his hands, for the want of something else to do. By the time Mary returned from the spring, Robert and Harold came from the tent. They had retired late and weary the night before, and as a natural consequence had overslept their usual time for rising. "What is that we heard you and Frank talking about?" Robert asked of Mary.

"Inquire of Frank," she replied; "I prefer that he should tell you."

"Well, Frank, what was it?"

"Nothing," he answered, doggedly, "except that sister wanted me to go to

the spring, and I told her I was afraid that the crabs and snakes would bite me."

"What did sister Mary want with the water?"

"To make coffee, I suppose."

"And do you not love coffee?"

"Sometimes; but I do not wish any this morning, for sister never puts in sugar enough for me."

"Well, well, we shall see who wants coffee at breakfast. Sister Mary, is there anything I can do to help you?"

"Cousin," said Harold, uniting quickly in the effort to shame Frank out of his strange caprice, "I wish you would let me too help you in some way. You are always so ready to do everything you can for us, that we are glad whenever we can do anything for you."

Mary needed nothing, except to have the kettle lifted to its place upon the fire. Frank was all this time warming his hands and feet, as if he was desperately cold. In reading the Scriptures, and repeating the Lord's Prayer, his voice could scarcely be heard; he knew that he had done wrong, and was beginning to repent. At breakfast, Mary asked him in a kind, forgiving tone, if he would not have some coffee; but true to his resolution he declined.

The first business of the day was to take care of their venison. Yet what should they do with it? They had no cool place in which to keep it fresh, nor salting tub nor barrel in which to corn or pickle what they could not consume in its green state. Harold's proposal was that they should cut the hams into thin slices, and jerk them in the smoke, as he had seen Torgah do; or else to dry them in the sun, which in the middle of the day was quite hot. Robert said he had heard or read of meat being saved fresh for several days by burying it under cool running water, and offered to try it at their spring. Mary said she liked both plans, but having had such good experience of Harold's baked turkey, she hoped he would now give them a specimen of baked venison.

It was finally resolved to give each plan a fair trial. One ham should be sliced and jerked; another should be baked for the next day's dinner, as the turkey had been; one shoulder should be cooked for that day's consumption, and the other put under the drip of the spring to prove whether it would keep until Monday.

"There is one advantage at least that we shall gain from these experiments," said Harold; "a knowledge how to economize our meat."

For a minute or two Mary had been evidently pondering upon some difficult problem; and Robert, observing her abstraction, asked in a jesting tone if she was studying anatomy.

"Not exactly," she replied; "I was thinking of two things; how to cook this shoulder, when we have nothing in which to bake or roast it--"

"O, as for that," Harold interjected, "I will provide you in ten minutes' time

with a roaster wide enough for an ox, or small enough for a sparrow. Do you just hang it by a string from the pole I will set for you above the fire; it will roast fast enough, only you will lose all your gravy."

"The gipsies' roasting-pole!" said she; "I wonder I did not think of it. The other thing is, that after you have sliced the steak-pieces from the bone, the remainder would make an excellent soup, if we had any vegetables to put with it."

"And what do you want?" Robert inquired.

"In beef soup," she replied, "cooks usually put in turnips, onions, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, and the like."

"Carrots and potatoes I fear we must do without at this time," said he, "but the rest I think I can furnish, or something very like them."

"What! have you a vegetable garden already growing on the island?" asked Harold.

"Yes," he answered, "a very large and fine one; an endless supply of the most beautiful white cabbage, and most delicate asparagus, besides quantities of spinach, okra, and other vegetables. The palmetto gives the first, the tender shoots of the bamboo-brier the second; the leaves of the poke, when young, furnish the third, and those of the wild violet the last, or rather a substitute in its mucilaginous leaf, for the okra. Beside these plants (all of which, except the last, need to be boiled in several waters to free them from their bitter taste), there are multitudes more growing around us that are perfectly wholesome as articles of food--the purslain, the thistle, the dandelion, the lambsquarter, the cresses and pepper-grasses, to say nothing of the pink-gilled mushrooms, and the fungus that grows from logs of hickory."

"I will ask no more questions about your garden," said Harold. "I will confess at once that it is one of the largest and finest in the world; but will say too that it requires a person of your knowledge to use it aright."

"And no great knowledge after all," responded Robert. "I could teach you in half an hour every one."

"I will await them here," said Harold, "wishing you all success in visiting the garden, and cousin Mary all success in preparing the vegetables for use."

That afternoon they engaged in another discussion about attempting a speedy return home. Robert and Mary had become impatient of their stay, and were despairing of any one's coming soon to their relief. The three and a half days of separation from their father seemed to them a month.

"Why not make the effort to return at once?" they contended. "This place is very good indeed; on some accounts we could not desire a better; yet it is not home."

Harold shook his head, and replied, "I am not sure, notwithstanding all your arguments, that any of us know where home is. One thing I do know, that this

island seems to be a very safe and comfortable place for people in our condition. Moreover, I am confident that your father will use every means for finding us; and we can scarcely be in a better place than this for being found. My opinion still is that we had better continue here for a fortnight or three weeks in safety, than to risk what we should, by starting in an open boat, to go upon the broad sea, we know not where."

Harold, however, was overruled. Mary and Frank united with Robert in resolving to attempt their return homewards by coasting; and Harold yielded with a sigh, remarking that his heart was with them, but his judgment against them. The moment the question was decided, Frank began to show the greatest glee. To his hopeful spirit, to try was to succeed; and he was even then in fancy revelling once more in the scenes of happy Bellevue.

But when should they begin their voyage? Not that day, for they were not ready. Not the next, for that was the Sabbath, which they had been taught to reverence. Not Monday morning, because there were preparations to be made, which they could not complete without working on the Sabbath, They resolved to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," by rest from labour, and by appropriate exercises, and then to start as soon after as possible; which, probably, could not be before Monday evening or Tuesday morning.

They prepared another oven, heated and protected as before, into which the ham of venison was introduced. They collected and cut a supply of wood to be used in case of cool weather the following day, and brought from the bank another basket full of oysters. After spending a pleasant evening in conversation, they retired to rest, happy in the thought that they had been trying to live as they should, and that they had resolved, of their own free will, to reverence the Sabbath, at the sacrifice of another day from home.

CHAPTER XV

THEIR FIRST SABBATH ON THE ISLAND, AND THE NIGHT AND MORNING THAT SUCCEEDED

The morning sun rose with uncommon beauty, and the young people having retired early to bed, were prepared for early rising. Frank now volunteered to aid his sister in preparing for breakfast; his repentance was shown not by words but

by deeds; and though it was only an act of duty performed towards his sister and the company, it was in part a very proper beginning in the observance of a day belonging to Him who encourages us to think that he regards whatever we do from a principle of duty to our fellow men, as being done to himself.

At the time of worship they gathered with more than usual solemnity around the accustomed place, and read the portion of Scripture for the morning. It was a chapter of unusual interest to them all, and particularly so to Harold. He had become increasingly thoughtful since their accident. This morning he appeared to be more serious than ever, and once or twice, when his turn came to read, his voice was so low and unsteady, that he could scarcely be heard. There was evidently some cause of distress to that youth of strong mind and pure life which the others knew not.

The Sabbath passed, as may be readily conceived, without being enlivened by any incidents of a particularly interesting character. It can scarcely be said that they did actually sanctify the Sabbath, for there was nothing spiritual, nor even hearty in their exercises; and they themselves felt that there was a great deficiency somewhere.

Their unmethodical though conscientious effort was useful in teaching them to look beyond mere externals for any real good to be derived. They learned they were imperfect even in their best performances, and without merit when they had done what they could.

Late in the evening they went to the seashore, and sitting upon a bank of clean sand near their flag-staff, looked upon the sea from which they had made so providential an escape, and to which they expected once more to commit themselves. A light breeze had been blowing from the west all day, yet light as it was it had been sufficient to raise the waves, and make them roar and break with ominous violence upon the shore. This action of the breeze revealed to them another fact, that two or three miles to the seaward there was a long and apparently endless chain of breakers extending north and south, as far as the eye could reach. They could see the large waves gather, and the white tops sparkle with foam. Here was another cause for thankfulness. Had the present wind been blowing on the day of their accident, they could not possibly have crossed that foaming bar; they would have been kept at sea, and been to a certainty lost in the sudden squall that arose that night.

But the sight of these breakers was also a source of disquiet, in view of their intended voyage. It was evident, as they supposed, that they could not sail with safety, when the wind was blowing with any freshness, either on or off the shore, on account of the rough swell, caused by the first, and of the danger of being carried out to sea by the last. They conversed long and anxiously upon this new feature in their case; and then, by general consent, kneeled together upon the

sands, in conscious helplessness, and implored Him who is the Lord of the seas, to care for them and direct their steps.

When they left the beach, the light of day was fading into the hues of night; and several faint stars peeped timidly from the yet illuminated sky. Mary and Frank retired to their room soon after dark. The larger boys sat for some time, conversing upon their situation and prospects, when observing the sky to cloud rapidly with the indications of a sudden change of weather, they went to the landing, made their boat secure as possible, and then laid down to rest.

The wind soon began to sigh in the branches of the huge oak above them. Each puff became stronger than the one before it. They could hear the roar of the distant surf, bursting angrily over the sandy barrier, and thundering on the shore. It was the beginning of a hurricane. The boys sprang from their pallets, and dressing themselves hastily, seized the ax and hatchet, and drove the tent-pins deeply into the ground. While thus engaged, Nanny and her kids came up, and showed a strong disposition to take refuge in the tent. The dogs also gave signs of uneasiness, following them around with drooping tails, whining and shivering, as they looked with half shut, winking eyes, in the direction of the wind. These signs of terror in their dumb companions only made the boys work faster, and do their work more securely. They did not content themselves with driving down the tent-pins; they took the logs cut for firewood, and laid them on the windward edges of the tent, to prevent the wind from entering below and blowing the canvas from above their heads. Had they the time they would have laid the sails of their boat, which they had hastily unrigged, above the canvas of the tent; but ere they could accomplish this, the wind burst upon them with the fury of a tornado. The grand old tree quivered to its roots, and groaned in every limb. The tent fluttered and tugged at the ropes with such force that the deeply driven pins could scarcely hold it down. It was fortunate that it had been pitched under the oak, for the long lower branches, which at ordinary times almost swept the ground, were strained downwards so far, that with their loads of moss, they formed a valuable barrier against the wind.

There was little sleeping for the boys that night. Scarcely had they entered the tent before the rain commenced. It came in heavy drifts, and was carried with such force that, notwithstanding the protection afforded by the oak, it insinuated itself through the close threads of the canvas, and under the edges of the tent. Mary had been awaked by the hammering, and Frank was now roused by the dropping of water in his face. When Robert entered their room to see how they fared, he discovered them seated on a trunk, wrapped in their father's cloak, and sheltered by that very umbrella which Frank had been provident enough to bring. They rolled up their bedding and clothes, and protected as best they could whatever seemed most in danger from the wet. They sat on boxes and trunks,

and wrapped themselves in cloaks and blankets; but it was in vain; they could not guard themselves at the same time from the rain above and the driven water from below. They sat cold and shivering until three o'clock in the morning, when the rain ceased and the wind abated. Then they made a fire; and just before day were enabled, by lying on trunks and boxes, to indulge themselves in a short uneasy sleep.

The clear sun shone over the main land before the wearied company awoke. Harold was the first on his feet, and calling to Robert, they hastened out to see what damage had been done. Mary also joined them, followed by Frank; for having dressed themselves during the night, they had no further toilet to make.

In every direction were to be seen traces of the storm; prostrate trees, broken branches, the ground strewed with twigs, and the thickets and vines loaded with packages of moss, torn from the taller trees. The sea roared terribly, and thick dirty billows came rolling up the river.

Harold was about to mend the fire for Mary, who said she wanted to drink something hot, as the best means of warming her chilled limbs, when Robert, glancing at the tremendous tide in the river, called to her quickly--"Do not waste one drop of this water in the bucket; there is only a quart left, and no one can tell when the tide will be down enough for us to obtain more." He ran to the bluff, and the others observed him make a gesture of surprise, look hastily around, and finally leap down the bank. He was absent only two or three minutes, and then returned with a pale face and hurrying step.

"Harold!" said he, scarcely able to articulate, "OUR BOAT IS GONE! Burst from her moorings!"

At this terrible announcement, every face whitened, and there was a general rush for the landing. It was even so. The boat was nowhere to be seen. The stake which had confined it had also disappeared. Far as the eye could reach nothing was visible but water--water, with here and there a patch of mangrove, higher than the rest, and bowing reluctantly to the rush of the waves. They looked anxiously over the watery waste, and then into each other's agitated faces. It was clear that their prospect of speedily returning home was hopeless.

"But perhaps," said Mary, who was the first to recover speech, "it is not lost. It may have only drifted up the river; or it may have sunk at the landing."

Robert mournfully looked, where he had already looked more than once, and said, "Well, we can try. But what is the use? something has been against us ever since we left home. Harold, shall we search the river?"

Harold seemed lost in thought. His keen eye had glanced in every direction, where it was possible the boat could have been driven; then lessening in its fire, it gave evidence of deep abstraction. Robert's question recalled him, and he slowly answered, "Yes; but it is my opinion we shall not find it. You know I have all along

had the idea that we ought not to leave this island. It has seemed to me, ever since the fish let go our anchor, that the hand of God was in this accident, and that we are not yet at the end of it. I am troubled, like the rest of you; but I have also been questioning whether it is meant for our harm or for our good. I do not think it is for harm, or we might have been left to perish at sea; and if it is for good, I think we ought to submit with cheerfulness."

They conversed awhile upon the bluff, in view of the dismal waters, then slowly turned towards the tent, which was now the only place on earth they could call their home.

CHAPTER XVI

A SAD BREAKFAST--SAGACITY OF DOGS--SEARCH FOR THE BOAT--EXCITING ADVENTURE--A PRETTY PET--UNEXPECTED INTELLIGENCE

Once more the young people assembled in their tent; once more they read the Scriptures, and knelt together in prayer. Their tones were humble and subdued. They felt more deeply than ever their dependence upon an arm that is stronger and farther reaching than man's.

Their simple meal was soon ready, consisting of the most tempting bits that Mary could select, as an enticement to their reluctant appetites. They sat down, and endeavoured to appear cheerful, but little was said, and less was eaten. Harold's face was towards the marsh. Robert observed him fix his eye steadily upon a distant point of land, where the opposite bluff of the river terminated on the sea. He looked as if he saw something unusual, but after a scrutinizing gaze of half a minute, turned away his eye, and relapsed into thought.

"Did you observe anything across the marsh?" inquired Robert, willing to relieve the silence.

"I thought I saw a little curl of smoke upon the point," he returned; "but now suppose it was the steam from the bluff, drawn up by the sun.

"Robert," he continued, "it is possible after all that we may find our boat. If not sunk at the landing, it is certainly somewhere up the river, in the direction of the wind. The tide has not yet begun to ebb. If it has lodged in the marsh, we can best see it while the water is high, and if it has not lodged, it may float back with

the tide. Suppose we set off at once to search."

Mary's reluctance to be left alone yielded to the necessity of the case, and begging them to be careful of themselves, and to return as soon as possible, she assumed a cheerful air, and tried to prepare them for their departure.

The boys promised to return by midday, unless delayed by finding the boat; and taking their guns and hatchet, together with a luncheon in case of delay, they set out, accompanied by Mum. Ere proceeding more than a few steps, however, Robert stopped to say, "Harold, we shall not need the dogs. Let us leave them for protectors to Mary and Frank. True, there is no danger; but they will feel safer for having them at hand. Frank, bring me Mum's chain. Here, Mum! Here, Mum!"

Mum came rather reluctantly; for dog though he was, he appeared to apprehend the state of the case. Mary observing this, exclaimed, "Cousin, I do believe that Mum understands what brother says. Only see how disappointed he looks!"

"O, yes," returned Harold; "dogs understand more than most people suspect. He probably heard Robert use the word 'chain'; and he has heard it often enough to know what it means. But they gather more from the eye and tone than from words. Mum, poor fellow, I am sorry to leave you; for I know you love hunting better than staying at home. But you know nothing of hunting boats, Mum; so we want you to stay and help Fidelle to guard your young mistress and master against the squirrels and opossums. If any of them come you must bite them well; do you hear, Mum?"

The poor dog wagged his short tail mournfully, as much as to say he would do his best; but at the same time cast a wistful look at the guns. With a charge to Mary not to let Mum loose without necessity, and to Frank not to approach the bluff except in the company of his sister, the boys were once more on the move, when Mary inquired, "But what shall we do if we see the boat coming down the river, or if we need you for any other reason?"

"True, true," said Robert; "I am glad you suggested it. We will load William's gun for you, and you must fire it for your signal. We shall probably be within hearing."

Robert well knew that Mary was able to do what he proposed, for her father had made it a part of his duty to instruct her, or cause her to be instructed, in every art necessary to preserve and enjoy life. For this purpose she had learned how to load and use the several varieties of firearms--to manage a horse in harness and under the saddle--and even to swim. Compared with most other girls she was qualified to be quite a heroine.

With many adieus and kind wishes from both sides, the boys finally set off. They struck directly through the woods for their old fishing point, at the junction of the creek with the river. Standing on the most commanding part of the bluff, they looked in every direction, but no sign of the boat appeared. Then

they turned their steps to the southeast, following, as closely as they could, the bank of the creek, though compelled oftentimes to make large circuits in order to avoid the short creeks and bay-galls that set in from the marsh. These bay-galls are wet spongy bottoms, shaded with loblolly bays, and tangled with briers, and the edges are usually fringed with the gall-berry bush--a shrub closely resembling the whortleberry, and bearing a black fruit of the same size, but nauseously bitter. Compelled to make great circuits around these miry bottoms, and interrupted by a close growth of vines and trees, the boys advanced scarcely a mile and a half to the hour. They left not a foot of the shore unexplored; still no vestige of the boat appeared.

About eleven o'clock they approached the tongue of land on which they had discovered the orange trees, and where they proposed to quench their thirst with the pleasant acid of the fruit, and afterwards to return to the tent. They had just headed a short bay-gall, and were enjoying the first glimpses of the south river, when they were startled by a trampling in the bushes before them; and a herd of six deer rushed past and disappeared in the dark bottom. Soon after a half grown fawn, white as milk, and bleating piteously, was seen staggering through the bushes, having a large wildcat seated upon its shoulders, and tearing furiously at its neck. Robert's gun had been levelled, when the herd appeared, but they passed too quickly for a shot; he was therefore all ready when the fawn approached, and aiming not at it, but at the fierce creature upon its back, both animals rolled together upon the ground. He would have rushed immediately upon them, had he not been restrained by the grasp of Harold.

"Not yet!" said he, "not yet! keep your other barrel ready, a wildcat is hard to kill, and will fight until he begins to gasp."

It was fortunate for Robert that he was thus arrested, for the cat was only wounded, and soon recovered sufficiently to limp away. "Now give him your second barrel, Robert; give it to him in his shoulder." Before he could do so, however, the cat slipped into the hollow of a neighbouring tree.

"He is safe now," said Harold; "we can kill him at our leisure. But keep your eye on the hole, and be ready to shoot, while I attend to this fawn."

When Harold took hold of the beautiful little creature, he discovered that the wounds were very slight. The ball had penetrated the back of the head and stunned it, without touching any vital part, and it was beginning to recover; the wounds made by the wildcat were only skin deep, and could easily be healed.

"Shall I bleed it for venison?" asked Harold, "or save it as a pet for Mary and Frank?"

"O, save it by all means," replied Robert, whose sympathies had been from the first excited by the piteous, childlike tones of the fawn. "Save it for sister, and let us make haste to finish this beast."

"Then lend me your handkerchief," said Harold; "mine alone is not sufficient for both collar and cord."

Robert approached him for the purpose, when he observed the cat creep slyly from his hole, and hobble away with all haste. "Quick, Harold," cried Robert, tossing him the handkerchief, "tie the fawn, and follow me," then dashed through the bushes in pursuit.

"Take care, you may get too near," Harold shouted; but Robert was already lost to sight behind the underwood. By the time the fawn was secured, Harold heard him hallooing about one hundred paces away, and going rapidly in that direction, saw him watching the convulsive throes of the wild creature as it lay gasping on the ground.

Harold looked on and pleasantly remarked, "You will soon get your name up for a hunter, if you keep improving at this rate. That is a splendid cat! What claws and teeth! Let us see how long he is." Putting his hands together at the thumbs, and spreading them out to span a foot, he ascertained that it measured two feet nine inches from the nose to the root of the short tail; and that, standing with its head erect, it must have been fully two and a half feet high. Its teeth and nails were savage looking things.

"I am glad he did not fasten those ugly looking things in my leg," said Robert; "but I was so excited by the pursuit, that I rushed at one time almost upon him. He had stopped behind a bush; all at once he sprang at me with a growl, showing his white teeth, bristling his hair, and glaring at me with his large fierce eyes. He dodged behind another bush, and when I next saw him he was gasping and convulsed as when you came up."

"It would have been a desperate fight, if he had seized you," remarked Harold; "you would have borne the marks to the end of your life."

Returning to the fawn, which struggled violently on their approach, they soon succeeded in allaying its terror by gentle tones and kind treatment. It yielded passively to its fate, and consented to be led wherever they chose.

The oranges were delicious after their long walk, and now excessive thirst. A few minutes served to rest their weary limbs, and they had just begun to discuss the propriety of returning to the tent, when the fawn pricked up its ears with the signs of renewed alarm, a neighbouring bush was agitated, and ere they could fully grasp their guns and spring to their feet, Mum came dashing up at full speed.

The boys were much surprised, and were afraid some accident had happened. Mum, however, showed no signs of anything wrong; he came up wagging his cropped tail, and looking exceedingly pleased. He cast a hungry look at the fawn, as though his mouth watered for a taste, but he offered no interference. On close inspection, Harold observed a string tied round his neck, to which was fastened a little roll of paper. He hastily took it off, and calling to Robert, they

read these lines in pencil:

"Come home quickly. I see some one across the river; he is waving a flag. Mary."

CHAPTER XVII

MARY AND FRANK--EXAMINATION OF THE TENT--SMOKE SIGNALS--DEVICES--BRUTE MESSENGER--RAPT--BLAZING THE TREES--VOYAGE--DISASTROUS EXPEDITION--NEWS FROM HOME--RETURN TO THE TENT

When Robert and Harold left the tent that morning, to look for the lost boat, Mary and Frank watched with anxious eyes their retiring forms. It was painful to be left alone in that vast solitude. But the act was necessary, and Mary resolved to bear it with cheerfulness. In order therefore to withdraw their minds from their situation, she proposed to Frank to join her in exposing to the sun those articles in the tent which had been wet by the rain.

Among these was a bundle of William's. "Poor William!" said Frank, "I wonder what became of him. Don't you think, sister, he was drowned?"

"I do not know, buddy," she answered with a sigh; "though I presume not. William was a good swimmer, and near shore. O, I do wish we could hear from our dear father, and he could hear from us! See here, Frank." She pointed to a valise-trunk. "This is father's, it contains his razors, and all the little things that he uses every day. I wish I could open it, and air everything for him; both top and bottom seem to be wet."

She tried the various keys in her bunch, and to her delight found one that fitted the lock. Some of its contents were quite damp, and no doubt they were saved from serious injury by her affectionate care. In it she spied a morocco case, which proved quite useful in the end; it was a case of choice medicines. Mary was careful to disturb nothing, except so far as was needful for its preservation; for, though her father had no concealments that she knew of, this was his private property, and she held its privacy sacred. After drying everything in it, they were replaced as before.

This work had occupied them about two hours, when Frank, whose eyes were continually directed towards the sea, with a lingering hope that he might

see his father sailing after them, exclaimed, "Sister, is not that a smoke across the river?"

From the bluff where, three miles distant, the opposite bank of the river overhung the sea, a bluish vapour was curling upward. It was evidently a smoke. Mary gazed at it with feelings both of hope and distrust. Who made it? What did it mean? She ran for the spy glass, drew it to its focus, steadied her trembling hands against a tree, directed it towards the point, and almost instantly exclaimed, "Some person is there. I can see a signal flying, like a handkerchief tied to a pole. But who can it be? If it is one of our people, why does he not come over? O Frank, how I wish brother and cousin Harold were here."

"Let us fire off the gun, sister," Frank replied, "that will bring them back."

They took the gun, loaded by Robert for the purpose, and fired it repeatedly. Mary then took another peep through the glass, and cried out--"He sees us, Frank, whoever it is; he is waving his flag. He must have heard our guns, or seen their smoke. I wonder I cannot see him. O, yes, there he is, lying on the ground, or half lying. Now he has put down the flag, and I can see him dragging himself along the ground by one arm. What can it mean? O, when will brother Robert and cousin Harold come back!"

Mary's impatience made the time seem very long. She employed herself in every way that she could devise for an hour, and then, turning to Frank with a bright look, clapped her hands joyfully, and said, "I have it! I'll bring them back! I mean to send a runner after them. I can do it--O, yes, I can do it!"

Frank looked troubled. "How can you?" he inquired. "I am the only one you have; and I am sure I cannot find the way any more than you can."

"No, not you, nor myself," she said; "but one that I know can find them, and can take a note to them too." She opened her trunk, took out a piece of paper, pencilled upon it the note recorded in the last chapter, tied it tightly with a string, which she fastened around Mum's neck, and said, "Here is my messenger! He will find them, I warrant." Then loosening the chain, she said, "Hie on, Mum! hie on!"

Mum looked at her inquisitively, and was evidently in doubt what to make of her command. She called him to the track of the boys, pointed to it, followed it for a few steps, and encouraged him to proceed, when the intelligent brute took the meaning, and with a whine of joy sprang away at a rapid trot.

The boys reached the tent about one o'clock, leading the fawn by the two handkerchiefs. They had been strongly tempted more than once to leave it behind, tied to a bush, or to free it entirely, as it somewhat retarded their movements; but having already taught it the art of following, it came after them with rapid strides, and for the latter half of their journey they had not to pull it in the least. Mary and Frank heard their distant halloo, and ran to meet them. They were delighted with the new pet, and spent a moment in patting its snowy sides; but the interest

excited by the person across the river absorbed every other consideration. As soon as Harold saw the smoke still faintly rising, he said, "I saw that smoke this morning. It was so faint I could scarcely discern it darken the sky, and took it for mist. That person has been there all night."

Robert had by this time adjusted the glass, and each looked in turn. They could see nothing more than a little smoke. Mary described the position in which she saw the person lying, and dragging himself along, after the guns were fired. "Then," said Harold, "I will let off another gun; and do you, Robert, place yourself so that you can see whether he notices it."

Robert laid himself flat on the sand, rested the glass upon a log of wood, that both he and it might be steady, and said, "Now fire!" About a quarter of a minute after the discharge he exclaimed, "I see him! He is lying upon the sand beneath the shade of a cedar. I see him move. He rests on one arm, as though he were sick or hurt. Now he drags himself as you describe, sister. There is his flag flying again. He uses only one arm. The other hangs down uselessly by his side. Who can it be? I wish he was in the sunshine, for then I could see his complexion. But I am sure it is not a white man."

"O, it is Riley!" said Frank. "I know it is Riley come after us. Now we can go home again."

Harold took the glass and used it as Robert had done. The person had by this time put down the flag, and was reclining languidly against some support behind him. Harold saw him grasp his left arm with his right hand, move it gently, and lie back as before. "That person is badly hurt," he remarked. "Instead of helping us, he wants us to help him. It must be some one who was cast away in the storm last night. Oh, for our boat! Robert, we must go over and help him. We can make a raft. It is not three miles across. We have the oars and paddle of our boat, and we can surely make that distance and back this evening, by hard work. Let us see if there is not timber enough near at hand for a raft."

They looked at a fallen tree not far distant, and wished it were only near the river bank. "But what do I say?" said Robert. "The palmetto, which I felled for the cabbage, is sixty or seventy feet long, straight as an arrow, and what is better, just at the river side."

Off they went with ax, hatchet, and nails. Mary called after them to say, that if they would show her the way, she and Frank would follow them with something to eat.

"Do, cousin, if you please," said Harold. "I, for one, am hungry enough. We will blaze a path for you as we pass along. Do follow us soon."

"Do you mean that you will chop the trees as you pass?"

"Yes, yes. We will chop them so as to show the white wood beneath the bark. That is called a blaze. You cannot mistake your way."

The work of blazing the path scarcely detained them at all; an experienced woodsman can do it with a single blow of his ax as he moves, without stopping. Many of the trees were cut so as to show little more than the mark of the hatchet. Coming to the fallen palmetto, the boys cut it into four lengths, one of twenty, two of seventeen, and the remainder of ten feet long. It was easy work; the palmetto is a soft wood, and every blow of the ax, after going beneath the hard surface, made a deep cut. Then with the aid of levers, they rolled the logs to the water's edge; they pinned them together, sharpened the bow for a cutwater, and fastened some cross pieces on top for seats, and as receptacles for the thowl pins.

While thus engaged, Mary and Frank, guided by the blazed trees, and attracted by the sound of the ax, came with a basket full of provision, and setting it before them, remarked, "I am sorry we have no water yet to offer you, but here are some of the oranges we brought the other day."

It is almost incredible what a deal of work can be accomplished in a limited time, where a person works with real vigour and good will. The boys were themselves astonished to find that shortly after three o'clock they were seated on their raft, with Mary and Frank aboard, rowing rapidly towards the landing at the tent. A glance now at the spring showed that they could supply themselves with water, and while Harold scooped out a basin, and dammed it against the occasional overflow of a wave, Robert went with Mary and Frank to the tent, from which he brought down the guns, a jug for water, the spy-glass, and the morocco medicine case, of which Mary had told him, and which he supposed might be needed by the sick person.

Once more Robert and Harold embarked, leaving the younger ones on the shore. "Do not be alarmed," said they, seeing the tears start into Mary's eyes at the prospect of another separation. "Make a good fire on shore, and put your trust in God. We will try to return before dark; and we hope to bring you good news from home. If the person yonder is a messenger from Tampa, we will let you know by firing two guns; look out, and listen for them about five minutes after you see us land." With a silent prayer to God from each party for safety and success, the voyagers waved adieu to the others, and were soon moving through the water at the rate of more than two miles the hour.

However earnest they were to relieve the person apparently in distress, the boys did not approach the opposite shore without caution. They knew themselves to be in the land of savages, who were exceedingly ingenious and patient in their schemes of violence. Each took in turn the glass, when relieved by the other in rowing, and directed it upon the point to which they were going. Approaching within a quarter of a mile of shore, they rested upon their oars, and deliberately surveyed both the person and the place. They could distinctly see him reclining against the cedar, and beckoning with his right hand.

"Harold," said Robert, "that is a negro, and I do believe it is Sam, the carpenter. O poor fellow! how badly hurt he appears to be. I wonder what can be the matter!"

They pulled along very fast, and when within a hundred yards of shore stopped and looked again. "It is Sam," said Robert. "All's right! Let us push on now!"

Running the raft ashore, and making it fast to their ax, sunk in the sand for a stake, they hurried up the bluff. There indeed lay Sam, badly hurt and unable to move. They ran to him, and were about to throw their arms around him, when he beckoned them off imploringly, and said, "Stop! stop! for marcy sake don't shake me hard. Huddie[#] Mas Robbut! Huddie Mas Harrol! Bless de Lord to see you once mo'e!" the tears streaming down the poor fellow's face.

[#] Howdye.

"Dear old Sam!" said the boys, "we are so glad to see you. But what is the matter?"

"O, I am kill!" he replied; "my arm and leg bote got broke las' night. You got any water?"

"Plenty--plenty. We brought it for you," and they both ran for the jug, but Harold was foremost, and Robert returned.

"Mas Robbut," Sam asked, "wey de children?"

"We left them at the tent yonder. They were the first to see you; and they fired the guns that you heard."

"Bless dey young soul," he said, "I do lub 'em."

"But how is father?"

"Berry well--berry well--O Lord my leg!--'sept he in mighty trouble 'bout you all."

"Here is the water, Sam," said Harold returning, "let me hold the jug while you drink. There, don't take too much at first--it may hurt you. How is uncle?"

Sam told him. While they were conversing, Robert ran to the raft, brought from it his gun, went to the most conspicuous part of the bluff, and waving first a white handkerchief, until he received an answering signal from Mary and Frank, fired the two barrels at the interval of several seconds.

"Please mossa, let me hab some mo'e water?" Sam asked; then taking a hearty draught, he said, "Bless de Lord for dis nice cool water! It is so good!"

They inquired of him the nature and occasion of his accident. "It was de boat las' night--Riley's boat," said he. "It kill him and cripple me. We come to look for you all. De win' blow and de sea rise; and me and Riley went to draw the boat

higher on sho', w'en a big wave lif' de boat and pitch it right into Riley's breast. It kill him I s'pose--I nebber see him no mo'e. W'en I come to my senses, I bin lie right on de beach, wi' my arm and leg broke, and de water dashin' ober me. I drag myself up here las' night, by my well arm and leg; but if it hadn't bin for de win' I nebber bin git here at all--it lif' me up like a fedder."

"That is talking enough for this time, Sam," said Robert; "you are too sick and weak, and we have no time to spare. Let us carry you to our tent, and there you may talk as much as you will. Is there anything we can do for you before we move?"

"Only to give me a little mo'e water." He had already drunk a quart. He also pointed them to a certain spot, where they found Riley's rifle and its equipments, together with an ax and several gourds. These were transferred to the raft; and Harold said, "Come, Sam, tell us how we can help you. The sun is fast going down, and we have a long way to go. Mary and Frank don't wish to be left in the dark, and are no doubt looking for us to start."

"De childun! Bless 'em!" said Sam. "I do want to see dey sweet face once mo 'e. But I 'fraid it will kill me to move. See how my arm and leg swell a'ready."

After much demurring, Sam consented to attempt the removal; and though he groaned and shuddered at the thought, it was effected with far less pain than he expected. They spread his blanket beside him, helped him into the middle of it, lapped and pinned its edges over a strong pole with splinters of cedar, and taking each an end of the pole, lifted him gently from the ground, and bore him at full length to the raft, where they had previously prepared a couch of moss.

The sun sunk into the waters ere they had gone half a mile; but the boys pulled with a hearty good will, and moreover with the advantage of a little wind in their favour. It was dark when they landed, or rather, dark as it could be with a bright moon nearly at the full. Robert took occasion while at the helm to re-load his two barrels with powder, and repeat the signal agreed upon. As the darkness deepened they could see afar off the figures of Mary and Frank standing upon the beach, before a fire which they had made as a guide to the voyagers, and listening apparently to every thump of the oars. Long before words could be distinguished, Frank's clear voice rang over the waters in a tone of inquiry. The two boys united their voices at a high musical pitch, and sung out, "Sam! Sam!" repeating it at intervals until they perceived from the tones of the children on shore that the name had been heard. Presently Frank's voice shouted shrilly, "Howdy, Sam?" Poor Sam tried to answer, but his voice was too weak. Robert and Harold answered for him. Mary would have called out too; but the truth is she

was crying for joy, and was not able to utter a word.

CHAPTER XVIII

NIGHT LANDING--CARRYING A WOUNDED PERSON--SETTING ONE'S OWN LIMBS WHEN BROKEN--SPLINTING A LIMB--REST TO THE WEARY

It was a picturesque scene as the raft drew near shore. The soft moonlight upon the bluff--the faint sparkle of the briny water broken by the oars--the lurid light from the resinous fire--the dark shadows and excited movements of Mary and Frank--formed altogether a group worthy of a painter's skill.

Frank could scarcely be restrained from rushing through the water to welcome the new comer; but when he heard how weak he was, and in what bad condition, he waited in quietness. Harold took him in his arms, and Robert made a stepping place for Mary with the oars, and they both shook hands with the poor fellow, and told him how sorry they were to see him so badly hurt.

Leaving Harold and Frank at the raft, Robert and Mary hastened to the tent to prepare a place for the invalid, that he need not be disturbed after being once removed. They lit a candle, piled the trunks in a corner of the room, and taking most of the moss that constituted their beds, laid it in another corner, remarking, "We can easily obtain more; or we can even sleep on the ground tonight, if necessary, for his sake."

"I wish we had an old door, or even a plank long enough for him to lie upon, as we bring him from the raft," said Robert, "it would be so much easier to his broken bones, if they could be kept straight. But the blanket is next best, and with that we must be content."

By the time the transfer was completed, the boys were exceedingly weary, having been disturbed all the preceding night, and engaged in vigorous and incessant effort ever since they arose from their short sleep. They sat for half an hour revelling in the luxury of rest. Sam appeared to suffer so much and to be so weak, that they discouraged him from talking, and took their own seats outside the tent, that he might be able to sleep.

"What have you done with the fawn, sister?" inquired Robert, willing to divert their minds from the painful thoughts that were beginning to follow the

excitement of hearing from home.

"O, we fed it with sassafras leaves and grass," said she, "and gave it water. After that we sewed the torn skin to its place upon the neck, and it appears to be doing very well."

"You are quite a surgeon, cousin Mary," Harold remarked. "I think we shall have to call you our 'Sister of Mercy.' If, however, our handkerchiefs are still tied to it, I will suggest that it may be best for it, as well as for us, that you make a soft pad for its neck, and put on the dog's collar."

"We have done that already," she replied. "I thought of it as soon as we returned to the tent and saw the dog's chain. But as for my being a surgeon, it requires very little skill to know that the sooner a fresh wound is attended to, and the parts brought to the right place for healing the better."

"That is a fact," said Robert, starting, as a deep groan from the tent reached his ears; "and that reminds me that perhaps Sam is suffering at this moment for the want of having his bones set. We must attend to them at once."

"Set a broken arm and leg!" exclaimed Harold in surprise. "Why, Robert, do you know how to do it?"

"Certainly," he replied. "There is no mystery about it; and father, you know, teaches us children everything of the kind, as soon as we are able to learn it. I have never set the bones of a *person*, but I did once of a dog, and succeeded very well."

Harold asked him to describe the process. Robert replied, "If the bones appear to have moved from their proper place, all that you have to do is to pull them apart lengthways by main strength so that they will naturally slide together, or else can be made to do so by the pressure of your hand. Then you must bandage the limb with strips of cloth, beginning at its extremity, so as to keep the parts in place; and over this you must bind a splint, to keep the bone from being bent or jostled out of place. That is all."

They went into the tent, and made inquiry of Sam whether his bones did not need attention. He replied that maybe his leg was in need of setting, but that as for his arm he had *sot* that himself, and that it was in need only of splintering.

"You set it yourself! Why, how did you manage that?" inquired Robert.

"You remember, Mas Robbut, I bin hab my arm broke once befo'e; so I knowed jes what to do," replied Sam, and then he went on to describe his process. He said that finding the bones out of place, he had tied the hand of his broken arm to a root of the cedar, and strained himself back until the bones were able to pass, when he pressed them into place by means of his well hand.

After that he tore some strips from his clothing, and tied the hand over his breast, at the same time stuffing his bosom full of moss, to keep the bone straight, and over all passing a bandage, to keep the arm against his side. He had made a

similar attempt to set the bone of his leg, but it pained him so much that he had given up the attempt.

On examination, Robert learned that the arm was broken between the elbow and shoulder, and that the leg was fractured between the knee and ankle. "The leg," said he, "is safe enough. Below the knee are two bones, and only one of these is broken. Would you like to have the bandage and splints put on your arm tonight?"

Sam replied that he was sure he should sleep better if Mas Robert was not too tired to attend to it, for he would be "mighty onrestless" while his bones were in that "fix."

The wearied boy pondered a moment, and asked his sister to tear one of the sheets or table-cloths into strips about as wide as her three fingers, and to sew the ends together, to make a bandage five or six yards long, while he and Harold prepared the splints. They then went to the palmetto tree, half a mile distant, and selecting one of the broadest and straightest of its flat, polished limbs, returned to the tent, and produced from it a lath about the length of the arm. Having bandaged the limb from the finger-ends to the shoulder, they bound it to this splint, which extended from the armpit to the extremity, and Robert pronounced the operation complete.

Sam was profuse in his praise of Robert's surgery, bestowing upon it every conceivable term of laudation, and seeming withal to be truly grateful. "Tankee, Mas Robert! Tankee, Mas Harold! Tankee, my dear little misses! Tankee, Mas Frank too! Tankee, ebbery body! I sure I bin die on dat sand-bank, 'sept you all bin so kind to de poor nigger."

"No more of that, Sam," said Robert, "you were hurt in trying to help us; it is but right we should help you."

At the close of this scene, the young people prepared for bed. It was past ten o'clock, and they were sadly in need of rest; but so strongly had their sympathies been excited for their black friend, that even little Frank kept wide awake, waiting his turn to be useful. When, however, their work was done, and they had lain down to rest, they needed no lullaby to hush them into slumber. Within twenty minutes after the light was extinguished, and during the livelong night, nothing was to be heard in that tent but the hard breathing of the wearied sleepers. Thanks to God for sleep! None but the weary know its blessedness.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SURPRISE AND DISAPPOINTMENT--NAMING THE FAWN--SAM'S STORY--DEPRESSION AFTER EXCITEMENT--GREAT MISFORTUNE

Had there been nothing to excite them the company might have overslept themselves on the following morning. But shortly after daylight they were awaked by an incident that hurried them all out of bed. It was nothing less than hearing Frank exclaim, in a laughing, joyous tone, "O father, howdy! howdy! I am so glad you have come!"

The dull ears of the sleepers were caught by these welcome words, and all sprang to their feet.

"Father! Father! Is he here?" they asked. "Where, Frank? where!"

"Yonder," said he, sitting bolt-upright in bed, rubbing his half-opened eyes with one hand, and with the other pointing to a corner of the tent. "Isn't that father? I saw him there just now."

It was only a dream. Frank had been thinking more than usual of home during the day and night past, and it was natural that his visions of the night should be of the same character with his dreams of the day. He fancied that his father had found the lost boat, and having tied it at the landing, was coming to the tent. Poor fellow! he was sadly disappointed to learn that it was all a dream. The picture was so vivid, and his father looked so real, that for a moment he was perfectly confused. Mary tried to comfort him by saying, "Never mind, buddy; we *will* see him coming some of these days. But though father is not here, you remember that Sam is, and that he is going to tell us about home, as soon as he is able to talk. Come, let us get up, and see how he is." The history of the preceding day dawned slowly upon the mind of the bewildered child, and the sense of disappointment was gradually lost in the hope of hearing Sam's story.

The wounded man had spent a night of suffering. His leg pained him so intensely, that several times he had been on the point of calling for assistance; but hearing from every one that peculiar breathing which betokens deep sleep, and remembering that they had undergone immense fatigue, he stifled his groans, and bore his sufferings in silence.

While Robert and Harold were occupied with kind offices around the couch, Mary and Frank went to see after the fawn. Its neck was somewhat sore to the touch, but otherwise it appeared to be doing well. They gave it more water, hay and sassafras leaves. Frank offered it also a piece of bread; but wild deer are not used to cookery, and the fawn rejected it; though, after becoming thoroughly tamed, it became so fond of bread of every kind, that it would follow Frank all over the woods for a piece no bigger than his finger. "What shall we call her?" asked Frank.

"We will have a consultation about that," replied Mary, as she saw the others approaching. "Cousin Harold, what name would you give?"

"Snow or Lily, I think, would suit her colour very well," he answered.

"Brother Robert, what is yours?"

"As she came from among the flowers," he said, "I think Flora would do very well."

"Yes," added Mary, "and very pretty names all Frank, what is yours?"

"Anna," said he, "I would like to talk to her sometimes, and to make believe that she was Sister Anna."

"That would sound almost too much like Nannie," Mary objected, and then asked, "Did you say, brother, that you gave her to me?" He replied, "Yes." "Then," she added, "I will call her Dora, for I heard father say that that name means a gift."

"Dora let it be," said Robert, patting its delicate head. "Miss Dora, I wish you a speedy cure, and a pleasant captivity."

About nine o'clock Sam awakened from a refreshing sleep, and the anxious company assembled at his side to hear what he had to tell about home. "I a'nt got much to tell," said Sam, "I lef so soon a'ter you all, dat you know most all sept what happen to me and Riley on de way."

"Let us hear it all," said Robert.

"But before you begin," interrupted Mary, "do tell us about William. Was he drowned or not?"

(For the sake of the reader who may not be familiar with the lingo of southern and sea-coast negroes, the narrative will be given in somewhat better English, retaining, however, the peculiarities of thought and drapery.)

"O, no, Misses," he replied to Mary's question. "He only fell backward into the water, and was a little strangled. He rose directly, and gave the alarm. I suppose the reason that you did not hear him was that he was under the wharf, holding tight to a post, for fear some of the fish might come and take hold of him too. He came with me to Riley's Island."

"Now do you begin at the beginning," said Robert, "and tell us one thing after another, just as it happened. If there is anything of which we wish to hear more particularly, we will stop you to inquire."

"Well," said Sam, "you know that when you left I was working in the back room. I was putting in the window sash, when I heard your father talking to some one at the door, and saying, 'Stay here, I will be out in a moment!' He went into his room, came out with something in his hand, and spoke a word to the man at the door, when we heard William's voice, crying out, 'Help! help!' as if he was half smothered. Your father said, 'What can be the matter?' I heard him and the stranger running towards the bluff, and I ran too. When I reached a place where I could see you (for the little cedars were between the house and the water), your

father had just fallen upon his knees. He had his two hands joined together, and was praying very hard; he was pale as a sheet, and groaned as if his heart was breaking. For a while I could hardly take my eyes off from him; but I could see you in the boat, going over the water like a dove through the air, leaving a white streak of foam behind. Presently your father rose from his knees, and said, 'It is a devil fish! He cannot hold that gait long. Sam, do you and William (for William had by this time come up from the water), get the canoe ready in a minute, and let us pursue them;' then he wrung his hands again, and said, 'O, my God, have mercy, and spare my children!'

"William and I ran a few steps toward the canoe, but I came back to tell master that the canoe could not float--a piece of timber had fallen from the wharf, and punched a great hole in it. Then the soldier spoke, and said, 'The Major has a fine sail boat, Doctor. If you can do no better, I will ride very fast, and ask him to send it.' 'Do, if you please,' master said. 'Tell the Major he is my only help on earth. Lay your horse to the ground, good soldier, I will pay all damages.' The soldier turned short off, clapped his spurs to his horse, and made him lay himself almost straight to the ground.

"When your father came to the canoe, he said quickly, 'We can mend that hole, and set off long before the boat comes from Tampa. Peter, make a fire here at once--quick! quick! Judy, run to the house, and bring down a pot, and the cake of wax, and a double handful of oakum. William, do you go to the house too, and bring the side of harness leather, two hammers, and a paper of the largest tacks. And Sam,' said he to me, 'let us take hold of the boat, and turn it over ready for mending.' The hole was big as my head, and there were two long cracks besides; but we worked very fast, and the boat was ready for the water in less than an hour. Your father worked as hard as any of us, but every once in a while he turned to watch you, and looked very sorrowful. At last you went so far away that we could barely see you, like a little speck, getting smaller and smaller. When you were entirely out of our sight, your father took his other spy glass, went on top of the shed, and watched you till we were ready to go. Then he came to us, and said to me and William, 'I have concluded to send you off alone; you can row faster without me. I will wait for the Major's boat. The children are now passing Riley's Island, and turning down the coast. Make haste to Riley, and say from me, that if he brings me back my children I will give him whatever he asks. If he needs either of you, do you, Sam, go with him, and do you, William, return to me; otherwise do you both keep on so far as you can with safety, and if you succeed, I will give you also whatever you ask. If you can hear anything of them from Riley, make a smoke on the beach; if you learn anything good make two smokes, about a hundred yards apart; I will watch for them. And now, my good fellows, good-bye! and may the Lord give you a safe passage and good success!' Neither

I nor William could say one word. We took hold of master's hands, knelt down, and kissed them. And, somehow, I saw his hand was very wet; we could not help it, for we love him the same as if he was our father, and the tears would come.

"We reached the island about twelve o'clock. Riley was gone. His wife said he saw the boat pass, knew who was in it, and went after it, without stopping for more than a calabash of water. When we heard that, we jumped into our own boat again, and pushed on. Riley's wife brought down a bag of parched corn, a dried venison ham, and his gun and ammunition, saying that if he went he would need these things. We begged her to make two fires on the beach; for we thought that although it was not the best news in the world to hear that you had been carried so far away, it was good news to hear that you had not been drowned, and that Riley had gone after you.

"In about an hour we met Riley coming back. He had gone to a high bluff, on an island south of his, and watched you until you had passed out of sight. He was now returning home, uncertain whether to go after you in the morning, or to give you up altogether. When we gave him your father's message, he said he would go, for that the Doctor was a good man, but that he must return home for a larger boat; that the coast below was dangerous, and that the boat in which he was was not safe. So we came to his island, where I staid with him that night, and William returned to Bellevue.

"As we left the island at daybreak we saw a vessel sailing towards Tampa, but too far for us to hail. That day we did not search the coast at all, more than to keep a sharp look out, for we knew that you had gone far beyond. But the next three days we went into every cove and inlet, though not very far into any of them. Riley said that since the change of Indian Agents, many of his people were hostile to the whites, and to all Indians who were friendly with them, and that perhaps he should not be safe.

"We saw some Indians on the first few days, but the last day we saw none at all. Riley said that this coast was barren and bad; nobody visited it. The Caloosa Indians, he said, used to live here, but they had been starved out. There was only a narrow strip of ten miles wide, between the sea and the swamps within, and a great fire had swept over it a few summers before, and burnt up almost all the trees. The Indians supposed that this part of the coast was cursed by the Great Spirit.

"All that day we found the coast so full of reefs and shoals, and covered with breakers, that we could scarcely get along; and we talked several times of turning back. These breakers that you see from the bluff, stretch from a great ways above. Riley did not like to pass them. He said he was afraid we could not stop anywhere, except on an island, which no Indian dared to visit; for that it was always enchanted with *white deer*,[#] and the curse of the Great Spirit was so

strong upon it that no Indian could go there and live.

[#] It is surprising to learn how widespread is the superstition among semi-civilized and uncivilized nations that white deer are connected with enchantment.

"We kept on, however, as well as we could, and hoped to find some place where we could pass the surf upon the shoals, and reach the shore, before we came to that terrible island. But the wind was against us, and also blowing on shore; and we made so little headway, that towards evening we had to force our way through the smoothest place we could find, and even then were nearly swamped more than once. When we landed it was dark. We saw a fire afar off, and thinking it might be yours, I tried to persuade Riley to go to it; but perhaps he thought it was on *that island*, though he did not say so; he replied only that we were going to have a storm soon, and that we must be preparing for it. We drew the boat as high on the beach as possible, and made it fast by his painter, made of twisted deerskins.

"After we landed I cut some wood, and tried to make a fire; but before we could set it a-blazing the wind came and the tide rose. We went to the boat, and drew it up higher on shore, and then higher still; but after a while the wind blew so hard, and the waves rolled so high, that it was not safe to be near the boat at all. Yet we could not afford to lose it; so we went down for the last time to draw it up, when all at once a big wave came and pitched it upon us as I told you.

"I had a terrible night. The water from the beach dashed over me while lying under the cedar tree to which I had crawled, and the rain poured down. The wind kept such a roaring that I suppose if a cannon had been fired a mile off you could not have heard it.

"The next morning I tried to set my broken bones. Then I dragged myself to the edge of the bluff to see if Riley's body, or the boat, or anything was in sight. But nothing was to be seen except the black water rolling in from sea. As the light became stronger, I saw afar off your tent and smoke, and I was then sure that the fire we saw the night before was yours. I tried every way to make you see me. I took Riley's rifle, and snapped it, but the powder inside was wet. Then I went to a bush, and with my one hand cut a long switch, to which I tied my handkerchief, and waved and waved it; but nobody saw me. I could see *you* very well (for my sight is good) sitting down, or walking about, as if you were in trouble about something. Then I tried to raise a smoke. Everything was wet; but the tree near me had a hollow, and in the hollow was some dry rotten wood. I spread some powder on the driest pieces, and by snapping the rifle over it several times, set it on fire; but it was a long time before I could find anything to burn well. While I

was trying at the fire, you, Mas Robbut and Mas Harrol, went off; but I kept on throwing into the fire whatever trash and small wood I could collect by crawling after them, until I was sure Miss Mary and Mas Frank would see it. At last I heard their guns, and knew by their motions that they saw me; and for a time I felt safe. But you were so long time away, and I was in such pain, that it seemed to me I must die before you could help me, though I saw you come to the tent, and heard your guns. And when, late in the evening, I saw that you had got a boat, or something of that sort, and were coming over the river to me, I was so glad that I--I--"

Sam did not finish the sentence. The tears were streaming down his black face, and the young people were weeping with him. There were but few questions to be asked. Sam's narrative had been so full and particular, that it anticipated almost every inquiry.

The severe labours of the day before, together with excitement and loss of rest, had so far relaxed the energies of the larger boys, that they did little more that day than hang about the tent, and converse with Sam and each other about home and their own adventures. Several times Harold proposed to Robert to join him in visiting the beach, to ascertain whether their signal had stood the storm, and if not, to replant it; but Robert ever had some reason ready for not going just then. At last, late in the afternoon, they took the spade and hoe, and went to the beach. The flag was prostrate, and lay half buried in the sand; and what was their dismay, on approaching the bluff, to see a vessel that had evidently passed the mouth of the river just beyond the shoals, and was now about four miles distant, sailing to the southward.

"O, cousin!" exclaimed Robert, "there is our vessel--gone! It is the cutter! Father is aboard of her! They came as near as they could, looking for our signal--and there it lies! Oh--h!" said he, wringing his hands, "why did we not come sooner?"

"I believe you are correct," replied Harold, looking sadly after the departing vessel; "we have missed our chance."

There remained one solitary hope. It was possible, barely possible, that some one on board might be looking that way with a spy-glass, and that the signal might yet be seen. The boys eagerly seized the flag-staff; they set the lower end upon the ground; they waved it to and fro in the air; they shook their handkerchiefs; they tossed up their hats and coats, and shouted with all their might (vain shout!), "Brig ahoy!" They gathered grass, leaves, twigs, everything inflammable, and raised a smoke, as large as possible, and kept it rising, higher, higher. They were too late; the vessel kept steadily on her way. She faded gradually from sight, and disappeared for ever.

The two boys sat down, and looked sorrowfully over the distant waters.

They were pale with excitement, and for a long time neither said a word.

"They may return," said Harold; "let us plant our flag-staff."

They dug a deep hole, set the pole in the middle, threw in the dirt, packed it tightly with the handle of the hoe, and then returned slowly to the tent, to inform the others of their sad misfortune.

CHAPTER XX

SPECULATIONS AND RESOLVES--FISHING--INVENTORY OF GOODS AND CHATTELS--ROASTED FISH--PALMETTO CABBAGE--TOUR--SEA-SHELLS, THEIR USES--THE PELICAN--NATURE OF THE COUNTRY--STILL HUNTING--WILD TURKEYS AGAIN--WORK ON THE TENT

The little company did not retire early that night. Sorrow kept them awake. They sat for a long time speculating upon the probable destination of the vessel, and upon their own expectations in the case. To one it seemed probable that their father had obtained the use of the cutter, for the purpose of examining the coast; to another, that he had been brought by it to the place where they had last been seen, and that he was now not far away; to another, that he would go down as far as the Florida Keys, and there employ some of the wreckers to join him in the search. At any rate they were sure that a search was going on, and that it would not be long before they were discovered, and taken home.

Ere retiring to rest that night they adopted a series of resolutions, the substance of which was that they should live every day in the expectation of being taken off, and yet husband their resources, as though they were to continue there for months.

1st. They were to keep their signal always flying.

2d. To be as much as possible on the lookout.

3d. To have a pile of wood ready for a smoke near the signal.

4th. To keep on hand a store of provisions sufficient for several weeks.

5th. To examine, and know exactly what stores they possessed.

6th. To use no more of their permanent stock than was absolutely necessary, but to live upon the resources of the island.

7th. To fit up their habitation more securely, that in case of being assailed

by such another storm as that of Sunday night, they should enjoy a more perfect protection.

8th. In every possible way to be ready either for departing home, or continuing there an indefinite length of time.

In consequence of these resolutions, the first business to which they attended on the following morning, was the preparation of the pile of wood for their signal by smoke; and the next, the provision of a stock of food. As a temporary fulfilment of this last named duty, Harold went with Frank to obtain a supply of fish, leaving Robert and Mary at the tent, to make out the proposed inventory of goods. Both parties fulfilled their contracts, and on coming together, Harold reported eight large trout, besides a number of crabs, and a small turtle; and Robert read a list, showing that besides the stores put up by their father for Riley, and those brought by Sam and Riley in their boat, consisting of bread and bacon, parched corn and dried venison, there were rations for a full fortnight or more.

Of the trout brought by Harold, all except one had been cleaned, and presented to Mary; the last he reserved for the purpose, he said, of giving them another specimen of wild-woods' cookery. Before sitting down to dinner, he took this one without any preparation whatever of scaling or cleansing, and wrapping it in green leaves, laid it in the ashes to roast. It was soon done. Then peeling off the skin, he helped each to the pure white meat in such a way as to leave the skeleton and its contents untouched. Mary's taste was offended by the sight of a dish so rudely prepared; but hearing the others speak in surprise of its peculiarly delicate flavour, she also was tempted to try, and then partook of it as heartily as any one else.

While Harold was absent on his fishing excursion, Robert, having completed his inventory, had obtained another stick of palmetto cabbage. By Sam's instruction, this was freed from every particle of the green and hard covering, boiled in three separate waters, in the last of which was put a little salt. When thoroughly done, it was laid in a dish, and seasoned with butter. Prepared thus it was a real delicacy, partaking of the combined flavours of the cauliflower and the artichoke.

Bent resolutely upon living as real "marooners" on the productions of the island, the boys felt that it was necessary for them first to know something more of the country around. It was therefore agreed that they should devote that day to a combined tour of hunting and exploration. To this Mary also consented, for she had now become more accustomed to her situation, and moreover had Sam with her as an adviser.

Taking an early breakfast, and calling Mum, they departed, leaving Fidelle as a protector to Mary and Frank. The course which they pursued was along the coast. For a mile they walked on the smooth hard beach, and saw it covered with

innumerable shells, of all sorts and sizes. Some were most beautifully fluted; others were encircled with spurs or sharp knots; some were tinted with an exquisite rose colour; others were snowy white, and others of a dark mahogany. Conchs of a large size were abundant, and there were myriads of little rice-shells.

"I wonder if these shells can be put to no use?" asked Harold.

"Certainly," Robert responded. "If we need lime we can obtain it by burning them. These large round shells may be cut so as to make handsome cups and vases. The long ones are used by many poor people for spoons. And the conch makes a capital trumpet; our negroes on the seaboard make a hole in the small end for this purpose. We often hear the boatmen blowing their conchs at night; and when the sound comes to us across the water, as an accompaniment to their boat songs, it is particularly sweet."

On learning these uses of the conch shell, Harold selected several fine specimens, and threw them higher on the beach, remarking, that in case they remained upon the island they would need other signals than those of the gun or the smoke for calling each other's attention; and that he intended to try his skill in converting some of these shells into trumpets.

Pocketing some of the most delicate varieties for Mary and Frank, they continued down the coast, attracted by a large white object near the water-side. At first it appeared to be a great heap of foam thrown there by the sea, but soon they saw it move, and Robert pronounced it to be a pelican. "It is a pity that it is not eatable," said he, "for one bird would furnish more flesh than a larger gobbler. But it is fishy."

"O, if that be its only fault we can correct it," replied Harold. "I recollect one day when you were sea-sick, hearing the captain say that he had eaten every sea-bird that flies, except Mother Cary's chickens; and that he took off the skin as you would that of a deer or rabbit, and soaked the flesh in strong brine; or if he was on shore he buried it for a day or two in the earth, and that then the flesh was pleasant enough. He said, moreover, that the fishy taste of water-fowl comes mostly from the skin. Come, let us get that fellow. I cannot help thinking what a nice shawl, in cold or rainy weather, his skin would make for Mary, if properly cured with all its feathers on."

The pelican, however, saved them all future trouble on account of either its flesh or its skin, for, being a very shy bird, it flew away long before they came within gunshot. Having ascended the bluff, they stood upon a bank of sand, and looking far down the coast saw it curve out of sight, without offering any inducement to pursue it further. Immediately upon the bluff, and for a quarter of a mile inland, the country was bare of trees, except here and there a cluster of dwarfish cedars, overtopped by tall palmettoes; but in the interior the forest trees appeared rising into loftier magnificence the farther they grew from the sea. Strik-

ing across this barren strip--which, however, was pleasantly varied by patches of cacti loaded with superb crimson pears, and by little wildernesses of chincopin (dwarf-chestnut) bushes, whose open burrs revealed each a shining jet black cone--and entering the kind of forest where game might be expected, Harold gave Mum the order to "Hie on"; and he was soon dashing about in every direction.

"I suppose," said Robert, "that you intend to *still hunt*. But if so, you must remember that I have the art yet to learn; and if you wish not to be interrupted by my blunders, you had better describe now, before we go to work, how it is that still hunters find their game, and then how they approach it."

"They find their game by various means," Harold replied, acknowledging, at the same time, the justice of Robert's remarks. "Some by their own keen eyes alone in watching or in tracking; others by a dog trained for the purpose, as we expect to do. This last is the easier if the dog is good. When Mum has discovered a trail, he will keep directly before us, and as the trail freshens he will grow more cautious, until at last his step becomes as stealthy and noiseless as a cat. We must then be cautious too. If the woods are close so that we cannot see the deer, nor they see us until we are upon them, our success will depend upon the quickness of our shots, and the certainty of our aim; but if the woods are open, so that we can see them afar off, we must use the cover of a hill or of a thicket to conceal our approach, or else one of us must leave the dog with the other, and advance upon them in the open woods."

"But you do not mean to say," Robert argued, in surprise, "that deer will allow you to come upon them in broad day-light, and shoot them down?"

"Yes, I do," he replied; "and it is easy enough if you will pursue the right plan. When a deer feeds, he directs his eyes to the ground; and during that time he sees nothing except what is just at his nose. That is the opportunity you must take to advance. The moment he lifts his head you must stand stock still; and if you can manage to be of the colour of a stump, he will be apt to take you for one."

"But can you stop soon enough to imitate a stump!"

"Of course you must be quick; but this brings me to speak of another fact. A deer never puts down nor raises his head without first shaking his tail. Keep your eye therefore steadily fixed upon him, and guide your motions by his signs. Old Torgah used to give me an amusing account of the difference between deer and turkeys in this respect; for, with all their sagacity, in some things deer are very simple, while the turkey is so keen and watchful as to be called by hunters 'the wit of the woods.' Old Torgah's account, given in his broken English is this: "Ingin,' said he, 'see deer feed, and creep on him when his head down. Deer shake 'ee tail; Injin stop still. Deer look hard at him, and say "stump! stump! nothing but stump!" Presently Injin creep close, and shoot him down. But Injin see turkey feed, and creep on him. Turkey raise 'ee long neck to look, and Injin stand still

like a stump; but turkey never say "stump!" once; he say, "dat old Injin now!" and he gone.' But see, Mum has struck the trail of something. Notice how eager he is, yet how patiently he waits for us. Come, let us follow."

In Robert's opinion, Mum's reputation for patience was, on the present occasion, not deserved; for his pace was so rapid that it was difficult for them to keep within sight, and moreover he soon sprang ahead, and burst into a full loud cry. "I thought you said that he hunted in silence," he remarked, almost out of breath with running.

"I said he was silent on the trail of *deer*," replied Harold, "but these are turkeys. Do you not see the deep print of their toes in running! Mum knows what he is about. His racing after them will cause them to fly into the trees; and then as he stands below and barks, they will keep their eyes fixed on him, and never notice us. There they are! See in that oak! Robert, do you advance behind the cover of yonder mossy tree. I will find some other place. But as my rifle will carry farther than your smooth bore, do not mind me, except to await my signal. As soon as you are ready to fire, let me know by a whistle; if I am ready, I will answer you; and then do you fire about a second after you hear me. I will take the highest turkey."

They advanced silently but rapidly. Each came within a fair distance. Mum kept up a furious barking as the hunters approached. One whistle was heard, then another; three reports followed in quick succession; and four turkeys, two of them magnificent gobblers, tumbled heavily from the tree.

"Well done for us! Hurra!" shouted the boys, rushing upon their prey.

It was indeed good shooting, although part of it was accidental. Robert fairly won the credit of his two shots, having brought down the birds he aimed at; but the ball from Harold's rifle had passed through the eye of the one which he had selected, and broken the legs of another unseen by him beyond, and it now lay floundering upon the ground unhurt, except in its fractured limbs, but unable to rise.

The young hunters swung their prizes over a pole, of which each took an end, and then turned their faces homewards. The distance was not more than two miles, but burdened as they were with guns and game, and compelled to cut their way through frequent network of the grape-vine and yellow jessamine, and dense masses of undergrowth, they were nearly two hours in making it. Frank spied them from afar, and giving Mary a call, bounded to meet them. "Whew!" he whistled, on seeing their load, "what a bundle of turkeys!" He offered to help them carry a part of the load, but they were too weary to stop and untie. They preferred that Mary and Frank should show their kindness, by providing them with some cool water. "We will pay you for your trouble," said they, patting their pockets, which were stuffed full of something heavy; "make haste, and let us have

it."

By the time they had wiped their wet brows, and begun to enjoy their rest, the water came. The boys first emptied their pockets of the shells and chincopins, found during their ramble, then cooled themselves by bathing their wrists; after which they drank, and casting themselves at length upon their couches of moss, they talked across the tent to Sam, who seemed to be as much elated as any of them with their success.

It was now past the middle of the day. The afternoon was spent in working upon their tent. Their object was to make it more impervious to rain and drift, in case of another storm; and this they effected by raising the floor, and by spreading the sail of their boat as a sort of outer awning.

CHAPTER XXI

RAINY DAY--THE KITCHEN AND FIRE--HUNTING THE OPOSSUM

It was fortunate for the young adventurers that they had executed so promptly their intended work upon the tent, for though they had no heavy wind, the rain poured down during the whole night; and when they arose next morning, the sky was full of low scudding clouds, which promised plenty of rain for all that day, and perhaps for days to come. But, though the tent was dry as a hay loft, there were several deficiencies. They had but a meagre supply of wood, and their kitchen fire was without a shelter. The wind and rain were both chilly; and, it was plain, that without somebody's getting wet they must content themselves with a cold breakfast, and a shivering day.

"Why did we not think of this before?" Robert querulously asked.

"Simply because we had other things to think of," replied Harold. "For my part, I am thankful that we have a dry tent."

"So am I," rejoined Robert, changing his tone. "But I should be still more thankful if we had a place where we could sit by the fire."

"Very likely, *now* since we know from experience, how uncomfortable it is to be without. But I doubt if any of us would be half so thankful, were it not for being put to inconvenience. I recollect a case in point. My mother was once taken sick while we were travelling through the Indian nation. At that time the Indians

were becoming hostile, and we were every day expecting them to declare war. O, how troubled we all were! I remember that every morning we made it a point to say how thankful we were for spending another night, without being scalped. But afterwards, when we had returned home, and could spend our days and nights in peace, we forgot to be thankful at all."

Robert smiled at the naturalness of the description, and remarked, "Well, I think we shall be thankful now for a fire and shelter. Can we not devise some way to have them?"

The result of this conference was, that in the course of an hour they set up the boat-awning as a sort of kitchen, enclosed on three sides by the remaining bed-sheets, and having a fire at the windward gable, near which they sat very cosily on boxes and trunks brought from the tent.

Contrary to their expectation, the rain began to abate about noon, and long before sunset the surface of the earth was so much dried, and the drops left upon the trees and bushes so thoroughly exhaled or shaken off by a brisk wind, that the boys used the opportunity to bring in a supply of wood and lightwood. The light-wood was very rich, and split into such beautiful torch pieces, that Harold was tempted to think of a kind of sport in which he had often engaged, and in which he was very fond. "We have been pent up all day," said he to Robert; "suppose we change the scene by taking a fire-hunt tonight."

"With all my heart," was the reply; "and I think no one will object to our having a fat roast pig for our Sunday's dinner."

"Probably not," Harold rejoined, "and I am still more in favour of the idea, for the reason that, as we take such game alive, we can keep it as long as we will."

Their preparation for the excursion consisted simply in splitting an armful of lightwood, which Harold tied into a bundle, to be readily slung over the shoulders by a strap. In the midst of their preparations Frank came up, and on learning their purpose, almost shouted for joy. He had so often heard Sam and William speak of the pleasure of their 'possum hunts, that it had long been the height of his ambition, as a sportsman, to engage in one; but for various reasons the convenient time had never yet come.

"O, I am so glad!" he exclaimed, with a face lighted with pleasure; "you will let me go, won't you?"

Here now was a dilemma. How could they refuse him? and yet how could they with propriety leave Mary with no other companion than poor bed-ridden Sam? The boys saw no alternative but to give up the hunt, until Robert proposed himself to stay with Mary, on condition that Frank should carry the torch and light-wood, while Harold bore the ax and gun. But to their gratification, Frank, perceiving the difficulties of the case, and ashamed to rob his brother of a place which he himself was incompetent to fill, set the matter at rest, by saying:

"No, brother, I will not go tonight; I will wait and go with Cousin Harold some time when Sam gets well. But you must give me the pigs when you come back, and let me feed them every day."

They praised him sincerely for his act of self-denial, and promised that he should be no loser on account of it. Soon as it was dark they bid him good-night, and departed. He stood in the tent door, happy in the thought of their pleasure, and watched the animated motions of boys and dogs, as the red light flashed upon the trees, and the whole party became gradually lost from sight in the forest.

The boys had not proceeded a half mile, before the quick sharp bark, first of Mum, then of Fidelle, gave indications of their having "treed" some kind of game. Hastening to the spot, they saw the dogs looking eagerly up a slender, tall persimmon, and barking incessantly. For a time they could discover nothing in its branches, or on its body; and had begun almost to conclude that (in hunter's phrase) their dogs had *lied*, when Harold took the torch, waved it to and fro behind him, walking thus around the tree, and keeping his eyes fixed on those places where he supposed the opossum to be. Presently he cried out, "We have him! I see his eyes! Mum, poor fellow," patting his head, "you never lie, do you?" Mum wagged his expressive tail with great emphasis, as much as to say that he perfectly understood both the slander and the recantation, and that he now desired nothing but the privilege of giving that 'possum a good shake. Robert also took the light, and holding it behind him, saw amid a bunch of moss two small eyes glistening in the dark. The aim was so fair that the gun might have been used with certainty, were it not against all hunting rule; an opossum must be *caught*, not killed. The boys plied their ax upon the yielding wood, the eyes of the now silent dogs being fixed alternately upon the game above and the work below. The tree cracked and toppled. Mum's ears stood perfectly erect; and ere the branches had time to sway back, from their crash upon the ground, he was among them, growling at something upon which he had pounced. It was the opossum; and like all the rest of its tribe when in the presence of an enemy, it seemed to be stone dead. They took it up by its scaly, rat-like tail, and again went on.

In the course of a short walk they took a second, and on their way back, a third. These were quite as many as they could conveniently carry; and taking their captives home, they made them secure, by tying a forked stick around the neck of each, on the plan of a pig-yoke. From the moment that these singular animals found themselves in the power of their enemies, they put on all the usual appearances of death; not a muscle twitched, nothing stirred or trembled; each limb was stiff, and each eye closed; not even the growl or grip of the dogs was sufficient to disturb their perfect repose. Robert could scarcely persuade himself that they were not really dead. Harold laughed.

"They can stand the crash of a tree and the worrying of dogs," he said, after

they were made secure; "but there is one thing which they cannot stand. See here!" and he poured a cupful of cold water on each. The shock seemed to be electric. Each dead opossum was galvanized into life, and pulled stoutly to break away from its wooden fetters. "Now let us to bed."

CHAPTER XXII

FRANK AND HIS "PIGS"--THE CAGE--WALK ON THE BEACH--IMMENSE CRAWFISH--THE MUSEUM--NAMING THE ISLAND

Frank's first words the next morning, as in his night-clothes he ran from Mary's room, were, "Have you brought my pig?"

"Yes! yes!" they answered, "three of them; and all yoked to boot, so that they cannot get either into the garden or the cornfield."

Frank did not comprehend this enigmatical language; he hastily dressed and went out. Close to the awning he found the new comers sitting, each secured by the novel pillory which Harold had contrived. They were ugly looking creatures, with long, hypocritical faces, coarse, grizzly hair, and an expression of countenance exceedingly contemptible. Frank had often seen opossums before, but the fancy name of pigs had caused him mentally to invest them with the neat and comely aspect of the little grunters at home. When he hurried from the tent, and saw them in their native ugliness, writhing their naked, snakey tails, he turned away with unaffected disgust.

"They are not very pretty," said Harold, watching the changes that flitted across the little fellow's face.

"No, indeed," he replied; "they are the ugliest things I ever saw. You may keep them and feed them yourself; for I will not have them for mine."

The unsightly appearance of the opossum excites in many persons a prejudice against its use for the table. But when young and tender, or after having been kept for several days, its flesh is so nearly in taste like that of a roast pig, that few persons can distinguish the difference.

A cage for the captives was soon constructed, of poles several inches in diameter, notched into each other, and approaching at the top like a stick trap. The floor was also guarded with poles, to prevent their burrowing out.

"Now we need one or two troughs for their water and food," observed Harold, after the prisoners, loosed from their neck-locks, had been introduced into the airy saloon erected for their accommodation. "I propose, therefore, that Mary and Frank shall go with one of us to Shell Bluff, and bring home a supply of conch shells, to be converted, as we need them, into troughs, cups, dippers, and trumpets."

Mary and Frank needed no persuasion to go upon this excursion, after the glowing description given by the boys on their return from the beach. Robert preferred to remain with Sam. The others set off--Harold with his gun, which, for reasons of policy, was an inseparable companion, Mary with a basket, and Frank with his dog and hatchet. On arriving at the beach, down which they were to pass for a mile or more, the youngsters amused themselves for a time with writing names, or making grotesque figures in the hard smooth sand; then ran to overtake Harold, who had walked slowly on, watching the sea-gulls plunge after their prey on the surface of the water; for a short distance they went with him side by side, chatting through mere excitement; then dashing far ahead, they picked up shells and other curiosities thrown up from the sea. Several times was Mary's basket filled with prizes, and afterwards emptied for others still more beautiful, before they reached the place which the boys had named "Shell Bluff."

The beach at that place was lovely indeed. For half a mile or more it looked like snow, mottled with rose colour here, and with dark brown there; while, crowning the bluff above, waved a cluster of tropical palmettoes, around whose bases gathered the dark and fragrant cedar.

Again Mary replenished her basket, Frank filled every pocket he had, and his cap besides, and Harold collected his handkerchief full of fine-looking conch shells. They were about returning, when their attention was attracted by the shell of an enormous crawfish, whose body alone was nearly a foot long, and whose claws, extending far in front, were of hideous dimensions. This last Harold said he must take home for "Mr. Philosopher Robert," and learn from him what it was.

Robert was much pleased to see the collections they had made, and particularly so with the shell. He said that this was another proof, if he needed any other, to show that they were on the western coast of South Florida, for he had often heard of the enormous crawfish that abounded there, and that were almost equal in size to the lobster.

"Let us be sure, Harold," said he, "to put it beside your oyster, with the raccoon's foot, as the beginning of a museum gathered from the island."

"Yes; and our rattlesnake's skin," Frank added.

"And our turkey's tail, and Frank's plume," said Mary. "We have the beginning of a museum already; for there are besides these things about twenty varieties of shells and sea-weeds in this basket, some of which I never saw before."

Harold was as much interested as any in the idea of a museum; for though he knew nothing of its proper arrangement, he had good sense enough to perceive that it was a very ready means of acquiring and retaining knowledge.

"But the name of this island," said Robert, musing; "I have several times wished that we had one. And why should we not, for who has a better right to give it a name than we, its only inhabitants?"

He expressed the mind of the whole company, and they soon proceeded to call upon each other for nominations. "The rule in such cases, I have heard, is to begin with the youngest," said Robert. "So Master Frank, do you tell us what you would have it called."

Frank mused a moment, and replied, "I will call it Turkey Island; because turkeys were the first thing we saw here."

"My name, I think, will be the Island of Hope," said Mary, as her brother's eye rested on her. "We have certainly been *hoping* ever since we came, and will continue to hope until we get away."

"Yes, but we sometimes despaired, too," answered Robert, "especially on the morning after the storm. I have thought of the Caloosa name--the Enchanted Island."

"Please, Massa," Sam implored, "don't call um by dat name. I begin to see ghosts now; and I 'fraid, if you call um so, I will see ghosts and sperits all de time."

"I think a more suitable name still," said Harold, "is the Island of Refuge. It has certainly been to us a refuge from the sea, and from the storm. And if it is the Enchanted Island, of which Riley spoke, it will also prove a refuge from the Indians, for none will dare to trouble us here."

Sam declined suggesting any name. He said, pointing across the river to the bluff, where he had met with his accident, "Dat my place, obe' turrah side;[#] and my name for him is Poor Hope."

[#] That is my place, over the other side.

The name decided by universal acclamation, was THE ISLAND OF REFUGE.

"I wish we had a horn of oil," said Robert, "I would anoint it, as discoverers are said to do. And if any person could suggest an appropriate speech I would repeat it on the occasion; but the only words I can think of now are,

'Isle of Beauty, fare thee well!'

And much as I admire everything around, I hope ere long to repeat those words

in truth."

CHAPTER XXIII

THEIR SECOND SABBATH ON THE ISLAND, AND THE WAY THEY SPENT IT

On coming together in the morning, Robert proposed that they should add to their usual religious exercises the singing of a hymn. "It is father's plan," said he, "to mark the Sabbath with as many pleasant peculiarities as possible."

Harold was gratified with the suggestion, but remarked, "As I cannot sing, you must allow me to join you in my heart, or else to assist the music with my flute."

"Oh, the flute, by all means!" Mary replied. "And see here what a beautiful hymn I have just found!"

Robert took the book, and read with remarkable appropriateness of tone and manner that exquisite hymn by Dr. Watts, beginning

"My God, how endless is thy love!"

The music that morning was unusually sweet. The voices of the singers were rendered plaintive by a consciousness of their helpless situation; and the rich tones of the flute, together with Sam's African voice, which was marked by indescribable mellowness, added greatly to the effect.

The subject of the chapter was the parable of the prodigal son. Sam, poor fellow, raised himself on his elbow, and listened attentively; his remark made afterwards to Mary, showed that, however far beyond his comprehension a great part of the parable may have been, he had caught its general drift and meaning. "De Lord is berry kind; he meet de sinner afore he get home, and forgib him ebbery ting."

About nine o'clock the young people separated, with the understanding that they were to re-assemble at eleven, for the purpose of reading the Scriptures, and of conversation about its teachings.

Robert went to the beach, and taking his seat upon a log, near the flag-staff,

looked upon the ocean, and engaged in deep reflection upon their lonely situation, and the waning prospects of their deliverance. His Testament gradually slipped from his grasp, and his head sunk between his knees. Such was his absorption of mind, that the big drops gathered upon his forehead, and he was conscious of nothing except of his separation from home, and of the necessity for exertion. At last he heard a voice from the tent. Harold and Mary were beckoning to him; and looking up to the sun, he saw that eleven o'clock had come and passed. He sprang to his feet, and in doing so, was rebuked to see lying on the ground the Testament which he had taken to read, but had not opened.

Harold, on leaving the tent, took his pocket Bible and strolled up the river bank, to a pleasant cluster of trees, where he selected a seat upon the projecting root of a large magnolia. His mind also reverted naturally to their lonely situation; but he checked the rising thoughts, by saying to himself, "No. I have time enough during the week for thoughts like these. The Sabbath is given for another purpose, which it will not do for me longer to neglect. When the Lord delivered us in that strange way at sea, I resolved to live like a Christian, but I have neither lived nor felt as I ought. The Lord forgive me for my neglect, and help me to do better." He knelt down, and for several minutes was engaged in endeavouring to realize that he was in the presence of God. His first words were a hearty confession that, although he had been early taught to know his duty, he had not done it, nor had the heart to do it; and, though in the experience of countless blessings, he had never been grateful for any until the time of that unexpected deliverance. He thanked God for having taught him by that dreadful accident to feel that he was a sinner, and that it was a terrible thing to live and to die such. He said he knew there were promises, many and great, to all who would repent of sin, and believe in Jesus Christ, and he prayed that God would enable him so to repent and believe, as to feel that the promises were made to him.

Rising from his knees, and sitting upon the root of the tree, he opened the Bible, and his eye rested upon the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come; buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Here he stopped, for his eyes filled, and the page became obscured. He put his hands to his face, and thought, "That passage surely describes *me*. I came to this spot as a thirsty person goes to a spring. My soul longs for something, I know not what, except that God only can supply it, and that I have nothing to offer for its purchase. Now God says that he will *give* it, 'without money and without price.' O, what a blessing! O, how merciful! Let me see that passage again."

He re-opened the Bible, which had been laid in his lap, but the place had not been marked, and was not to be found. After searching some time, he turned to the New Testament, and having opened it at the Epistle to the Romans, was

turning back to the Gospels, when his eye was caught by these words (contained in the seventh and eighth verses of the fourth chapter of Romans): "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." "Ah, yes!" he exclaimed, "how true that is! There is no blessing like it." Supposing that something might be said in the chapter to show how sin may be forgiven and covered, he read the chapter through, but was disappointed. The only clear idea he gained was that Abraham was counted righteous, and was saved, not by his works, but by his faith. This confused him. "I always thought," said he, "that people were saved because they were good. But this teaches,--let me see what,"--at this time his eye rested on the words, "Now it was not written for his sake alone (viz. that Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness), but FOR US ALSO, *to whom* it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

"Ah, there comes my case again!" he mentally exclaimed. "It does seem as if God is opening to me the scriptures. This fact, about Abraham, was *recorded* not for his sake, but FOR OUR SAKES *now*. And the blessing bestowed on him (that is, the forgiveness of sin), shall be bestowed on us too, 'if we believe on Him (that is, God the Father), that raised up Jesus from the dead, who was delivered (that is, given up to death--put to death) for our offences, but raised again for our justification.' But justification, what does that mean?"

He glanced his eye over the chapter. It flashed upon him that justification means nothing more nor less than what Paul had been speaking of throughout the whole chapter. Abraham was "justified"--that is, "sin was not imputed to him"--he was "counted righteous," on account of his faith. Now he understood the passage. It declared that we too shall be justified, if we believe on God, who gave up Jesus to suffer for our sins, and who raised him again that we might be counted righteous.

As soon as he had conceived this idea, and had certified his mind of its correctness, by reading the passage over several times, he fell once more upon his knees, and said, "O Lord, I am a sinner. But thou hast said, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money.' I come as a sinner, thirsting for pardon, but having no money to offer for its purchase. My only hope is in Thy promise. I plead it now before Thee. Thou hast promised, that as Abraham was justified by faith, so shall we be, if we believe on Thee, who didst raise Jesus from the dead. Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. Accept of me as righteous in thy sight, not because I am righteous--for I am not, but because Jesus Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Forgive my iniquities, cover my sins, and make me all that thou wouldst have me be, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

For some minutes he continued kneeling; his eyes were closed, his hands

clasped, and his bowed face marked by strong emotion. It was pleasant to be thus engaged. He had experienced for the first time the blessedness of drawing near to God, and now he was listening to that "still small voice," that spoke peace to his inmost soul.

Once more he sat upon the rough root of the tree. He opened his Bible to the same page which had been so instructive, but it was to the next chapter, where he read: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Yes, yes," he murmured, as his hand sought his bosom. "Peace indeed! Peace with God! Peace through our Lord Jesus Christ--and justified by faith." He continued reading:

"By whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

"Ah! is not this true?" he joyfully soliloquized. "We glory in tribulations. I used to wonder how people could glory in trouble. But now, thanks to God for trouble! especially for the trouble that brought us to this island, and brought me to Jesus Christ! Yes, *thanks to God for trouble*!"

Having read the chapter to the end, and found, as is usual with persons in his state of mind, that although he could not understand it all, there was scarcely a verse in which he did not discover something suitable to his case, he knelt down and consecrated himself to God; praying that the Lord would grant him grace to live as a Christian, and more particularly so to live, as to be the means of bringing his young companions to a knowledge of the truth. As he closed his prayer, the words of the morning hymn rose vividly to his recollection; he did not indeed use them as any part of his address to a throne of grace, but he used them as uttering beautifully the language of his own heart in that sweet communion to which he was now initiated.

"I yield my powers to thy command,
To thee I consecrate my days;
Perpetual blessings from thy hand
Demand perpetual songs of praise."

Looking at his watch he saw that the hour of eleven was at hand. He turned his face toward the tent, and walked slowly onward, and as he went his lips continually murmured,

"Perpetual blessings from thy hand,
Demand perpetual songs of praise."

While Robert and Harold were thus engaged, Mary told Frank to amuse himself not far away, and that after she had looked over her own lessons she would call for him. In the act of going to her room, she was arrested by the voice of Sam, who said:

"Please, misses, Mas Robert and Mas Harold both gone away; and if you can, read some of the Bible to your poor sick servant--do, misses."

Touched by his melancholy earnestness, she promised to do so with pleasure, after having finished Frank's lessons and her own; and indeed, urged on by his apparent thankfulness, she dispatched her task in one-half the usual time, and then called for Frank.

"What! have you learned your lessons already?" he asked, in some surprise. She replied, "Yes." "Then," said he, "I wish you would make mine as short, for it took you a very little while." But when she informed him of the secret of her rapidity, and he heard a plaintive, half-devotional sigh from Sam's corner, he said, "Get the book, sister; I will learn as fast as I can, and then we can both go and sit by him, while you read." Mary patted his cheek, saying that he was a good fellow, whenever he chose to be; and giving him the book, he stood by her side, and learnt his lessons very soon, and very well.

The chapter selected at Sam's request was the third of John. With this he was so well acquainted as to be able to repeat verse after verse, while Mary was reading, and he seemed withal to have a very clear idea of its meaning. Mary was surprised. She knew that her father was in the habit of calling his plantation negroes together on Sabbath evenings, and instructing them from the Scriptures, but she had no idea that the impressions made by his labour had been so deep.

It was not until half-past eleven that they were all assembled and composed. They sang several hymns, then conversed freely upon the subject of the chapter, which had interested them in the morning, and on which they had promised to reflect. These exercises occupied them so pleasantly that it was past the usual hour ere any one thought of dinner.

A part of Dr. Gordon's custom had been to call upon each of his children every day at their midday meal, to tell what "new knowledge" they had gained since that hour of the day preceding. On Sundays the same plan was pursued, except that the knowledge was required to be suitable to the day. This practice was on the present occasion resumed by the young people. Frank's new knowledge consisted of part of his morning lesson; Mary's, of a new method devised by her for remembering the order of certain books in the Bible; Robert's, of the

aim and object of the parable just discussed: it was a keen rebuke to the Scribes and Pharisees, who murmured against Jesus for receiving sinners and eating with them. When Harold's turn came, he spoke with much emotion, and a face radiant with pleasure. He said that he had on that day learnt the most important lesson of his life; how good the Lord is, and how great a sinner he himself had been; he had learnt how to love Him, and how to trust Him; how to read the Bible, and how to pray. He was not able to tell how it happened, but there was now a meaning in the Scriptures, and a sweetness in prayer, that he had never before suspected, and that he hoped it would last for ever. He concluded by saying that he could conceive of no greater blessing than that of being enabled to feel all his life-long as he felt that morning, after promising to try to live like a Christian.

To these remarks of Harold no one made reply. Robert looked down a moment, then directed his gaze far away, as if disturbed by some painful recollection. Mary gazed wistfully on her cousin, and covered her face with both hands. Frank slid from his seat, and coming to Harold's side, insinuated himself upon his knee, and looked affectionately into his face. All felt that a great event had happened in their little circle; and that from that time forth their amiable cousin was in a most important sense their superior. They separated in silence, Robert going to the spring, Mary to her room, and Harold to talk with Sam.

Late in the afternoon they went together to the seashore, and sitting around their flag-staff, on the clear white sand, looked over the gently rippling waters, and talked thankfully of their merciful deliverance, and of their pleasant Island of Refuge. The air became chilly, and the stars peeped out, before they sought the tent. Again soft music stole upon the night air, and floated far over the sands and waters. Then all was hushed. The youthful worshippers had retired. And so softly did sleep descend upon their eyelids, and so peacefully did the night pass, that one might almost have fancied angels had become their guardians, were it not for the still more animating thought that the *God* of the angels was there, and that He "gave his beloved sleep."

CHAPTER XXIV

MOTE IN THE EYE, AND HOW IT WAS REMOVED--CONCH TRUMPET AND SIGNALS--TRAMP--ALARM

The next morning, while planning together the employments of the day, Frank came in, holding his hand over his eye, having had a grain of sand thrown into it by an unfortunate twitch of Dora's tail. It pained him excessively, and he found it almost impossible to keep from crying. Mary ran quickly and brought a basin, for the purpose of his washing it out. He however became frightened at finding his mouth and nose immersed, and was near being strangled in the attempt. It would have been better for so young a person, if Mary had made him hold back his head, and dropped the water under the uplifted lid. She next proposed to remove it by introducing the smooth head of a large needle to the painful spot, and moving the mote away; but neither would Frank allow this. Robert then took the matter in hand, and having in vain blown and rubbed in various ways, endeavoured to remove the substance by drawing the irritated lid over the other, in such a way as to make the lash of one a sort of wiper to the other. But neither did this succeed. By this time the eye had become much inflamed, and Frank began to whimper. Harold asked him to bear it for a minute longer, and he would try old Torgah's plan. With a black filament of moss, the best substitute he could devise for a horse hair, he made a little loop, which he inserted under the uplifted lid, so as to enclose the foreign substance; then letting the lid fall, he drew out the loop, and within it the grain of sand. Robert observed that an almost infallible remedy is to bandage the eye and take a nap; and Mary added, that it would be still more certain if a flaxseed were put into the eye before going to sleep. Frank, however, needed no further treatment; he bathed his eye with cold water, wore a bandage for an hour, and then was as well as ever.

During the conversation that preceded this incident, Harold had brought out a hammer and large nail, and now occupied himself with making a smooth hole in the small end of one of the conches. Having succeeded, he put the conch to his lips, and after several trials brought from it a loud clear note like that of a bugle. Robert also, finding that the sound came easily, called aloud, "Come here, sister, let us teach you how to blow a trumpet."

It was not until after several attempts that Mary acquired the art. Frank was much amused to see how she twisted and screwed her mouth to make it fit the hole; and though he said nothing at the time, Harold had afterwards reason to remember a lurking expression of sly humour dancing about the corners of his mouth and eyes.

"Now, cousin," said Harold, when Mary had succeeded in bringing out the notes with sufficient clearness, "if ever you wish to call us home when we are within a mile of you at night, or half a mile during the day, you have only to use this trumpet. For an ordinary call, sound a long loud blast, but for *an alarm*, if there should be such a thing, sound two long blasts, with the interval of a second. When you wish to call for Frank, sound a short blast, for Robert two, and for me

three.

In his different strolls through the forest, Harold had observed that the wild turkeys frequented certain oaks, whose acorns were small and sweet. It was part of his plan to capture a number of these birds in a trap, and to keep them on hand as poultry, to be killed at pleasure. For this purpose, it was necessary that the spot where the trap was to be set should first be baited. He therefore proposed to Robert to spend part of the forenoon in selecting and baiting several places; and with this intention they left home, having their pockets filled with corn and peas. It did not require long to select half a dozen such places, within a moderate distance of the tent, to bait, and afterwards to mark them so that they could be found.

Having completed this work, they were returning to the tent, when they heard afar off the sound of the conch. It was indistinct and irregular at first, as if Mary had not been able to adjust her mouth properly to the hole; but presently a note came to them so clear and emphatic, that Mum pricked up his ears, and trotted briskly on; and after a second's pause came another long blast. "Harold! Harold!" Robert said in a quick and tremulous tone, "that is an alarm! I wonder what can be the matter. Now there are two short blasts; they are for me; and now three for you. Come, let us hurry. Something terrible must have happened to Frank or to Sam."

They quickened their pace to a run, and were bursting through the bushes and briers, when they again heard the two long blasts of alarm, followed by the short ones, that called for each of them. They were seriously disturbed, and continued their efforts until they came near enough to see Mary walking about very composedly, and Frank sitting, not far from the tent, with the conch lying at his feet. These signs of tranquillity so far relieved their anxiety, that they slackened their pace to a moderate walk, but their faces were red, and their breath short from exertion. They began to hope that the alarm was on account of *good* news instead of bad--perhaps the sight of a vessel on the coast. Robert was trembling with excitement. A loud halloo roused the attention of Frank, and springing lightly to his feet he ran to meet them.

"What is the matter?" asked Robert; but either Frank did not hear, or did not choose to reply. He came up with a merry laugh, talking so fast and loud, as to drown all the questions.

"Ha! ha!" said he, "I thought I could bring you! That was loud and strong, wasn't it?"

"You!" Robert inquired. "What do you mean? Did you blow the conch?"

"That I did," he replied; "I blew just as cousin Harold said we must, to bring you all home."

"But, Frank," remonstrated Harold, "the conch sounded an alarm. It said,

Something is the matter. Now what was the matter?"

"O, not much," Frank answered, "only I was getting hungry, and thought it was time for you all to come back. That was something, wasn't it?"

"You wicked fellow!" said Robert, provoked out of all patience, to think of their long run. "You have put us to a great deal of trouble. Sister, how came you to let him frighten us so?"

"Really, I could not help it," she replied. "When I went to the spring a little while since, he excused himself from going by saying that he felt tired; but no sooner had I passed below the bluff, than I heard the sound of the conch. I supposed at first it must be Sam, who had become suddenly worse, and was blowing for you to return; so I filled my bucket only half full, and hurried home; when I ascended the bluff I saw the little monkey, with the conch in his hand, blowing away with all his might."

"And didn't it go well?" asked Frank.

The young wag looked so innocent of every intent except fun, and seemed withal to think his trick so clever, that in spite of their discomfort, the boys laughed heartily at the consternation he had produced, and at the half comic, half tragic expression which his face assumed on learning the consequences of his waggery. They gave him a serious lecture, however, upon the subject, and told him that hereafter he must not interfere with the signals. But as he seemed to have such an uncommon aptitude for trumpeting, Harold promised to prepare him a conch for his own use, on condition that he played them no more tricks. Frank was delighted at this, and taking up the horn, blew, as he said, "all sorts of crooked ways," to show what he could do. The boys were astonished. Frank was the most skilful trumpeter of the company; and on being questioned how he acquired the art, replied, that when he and his mother had gone on a visit to one of her friends, during the preceding summer, he and a negro boy used to go after the cows every evening, and blow horns for their amusement.

CHAPTER XXV

A HUNTER'S MISFORTUNE--RELIEF TO A SPRAIN--HOW TO AVOID BEING LOST IN THE WOODS, AND TO RECOVER ONE'S COURSE AFTER BEING LOST--A STILL HUNT

It was remarked by Mary the next morning, that if some one did not go out hunting they should soon be out of provision. "Which for our character as marooners I hope will not be the case," rejoined Harold. "Come, Robert, shall we be hunters today?"

"We cannot do better," Robert languidly replied, "unless we go fishing instead."

"O, do let me go with you," begged Frank. "I am so tired of being cooped up here under this oak tree, and running for ever to the spring and to the oyster bank. I want to go either hunting or fishing."

"Perhaps we can do both," said Mary, perceiving from Robert's looks that he was disinclined to any great exertion. "Cousin Harold can take Frank and go to the woods, while you and I, brother, can catch a mess of fish."

"That will do! O, yes, that is the very plan," Frank exclaimed, clapping his hands. "Then we can run a race to see who shall do best."

The company separated; Harold took Frank and disappeared in the forest, where they were absent several hours, and Robert and Mary went to the oyster bank, where they supplied themselves with bait, and then embarking on the raft, began to fish for sheepshead, near a log imbedded in the mud, and covered with barnacles and young oysters. The success of the fishing party was very good; they soon had a basket half full of fish, and the remainder filled with shrimp.

Not so with the hunters. Robert and Mary were engaged in preparing their prizes for use, when they heard a sharp halloo, and saw Frank emerging from a dense growth of bushes, with the rifle upon his shoulder, followed by Harold, who was limping painfully, and beckoning them to approach.

Washing their hands with haste, Robert and Mary ran to meet them. Harold was seated on a log, looking very pale. Within an hour after leaving the tent he had sprained his ankle, and ever since had been slowly and with great suffering attempting to return. Mary was frightened to see the haggard looks of her cousin, and inquired anxiously what she could do to help him.

"Take the gun, sister," said Robert. "Lean on me, cousin, I will support you to the tent, and then show you the best thing in the world for a sprain."

Mary ran to the tent, put the gun in its place, prepared Harold's couch, and then at Robert's request hurried with Frank to the spring and brought up a bucket of water, by the time that Harold's shoe and stocking had been removed. The ankle was much swollen, and the blood had settled around it in deep blue clouds.

"Now, sister, bring me the coffee pot and a basin."

The basin was placed under the foot, and the coffee pot filled with cool water was used to pour a small stream upon the injured part. This process was continued for half an hour, by which time the inflammation and pain were greatly reduced. It was also repeated several times that day, and once more before retiring to bed,

the good effects being manifest on each occasion.

This accident not only confined the whole company at home for the rest of the day, but caused an unpleasant conviction to press heavily upon the mind of Robert--the whole responsibility of supplying the family with food and other necessaries would for a time devolve upon himself. This fact almost made him shudder, for though a willing boy, he was not robust; labour was painful to him; at times he felt a great disinclination to bodily effort, but the greatest difficulty in the way of his success in their present mode of life, was his ignorance of some of the most necessary arts of a hunter.

"Harold," said he, with a rueful face, the next morning, when they had finished talking over the various means for discovering and approaching game in the forest; "to tell you the truth, I am afraid of *getting lost* in these thick and tangled woods. It is a perfect wonder to me how you can dash on through bush and brier, and turn here and there, as if you knew every step of the way, when, if I were left alone, I should never find my way home at all. Now my head is easily turned, and when I am once lost, I am lost."

"I know exactly what you mean," replied Harold, "and in former times I used to feel the same way. But there are two or three rules which helped me much, and which I will give to you.

"The first is, *never allow to yourself that you are lost.* Say to yourself that you are mistaken, or that you have taken the wrong course, or anything that you will, but never allow the *lost feeling* to come over you, so long as you can keep it off.

"When, however, you ascertain that you have unfortunately missed your track, your next rule is to sit down *as quietly as possible* to determine your course. Most people in such a case become excited, run here and there, at perfect random, and become worse bewildered than before. First do you determine the points of the compass, and then strike for the point you are most certain of reaching. For instance, you know that anywhere on this island the sea lies to the west, and a river to the north. You can surely find either of these places; and when once found you will be no longer in doubt, although you may be far from home."

"But how am I to know the points of the compass?" inquired Robert.

"Easily enough," his cousin replied. "But before speaking of that, let me give you my third rule, which is, *never get lost.*"

Robert laughed. "That is the only rule I want. Give me that and you may have the rest."

"Then," continued Harold, "make it your constant habit to notice the course you travel, and the time you are travelling. Watch the sun, or else the shadows of the trees, and the angle at which you cross them. Early in the morning the shadows are very long, and point west. In the middle of the forenoon, they are about as long as the trees that make them, and all point north-west. And at twelve

o'clock they are very short, and point due north. To a woodsman the shadows are both clock and compass; and by keeping your mind on them, you can easily make what the captain would call your *dead reckoning*."

"But," said Robert, "what would you do on such a day as this, when there is neither sun nor shadow?"

"You must work by another rule," he replied. "Old Torgah gave me three signs for telling the points of the compass, by noticing the limbs, the bark, and the green moss on the trunks of trees *well exposed* to the sun. Moss, you know, loves the shade, while the bark and limbs grow all the faster for having plenty of light. As a general rule, therefore, you will find the south, or sunny side of a tree marked by large limbs and thick, rough bark, and the north side covered, more or less, with whatever green moss there may be on it.[#] Did I ever tell you how these signs helped me once to find my way home?"

[#] Happening not long since to converse with an old and observant farmer, on the subject of these natural signs, he pointed out another.

"Notice," said he, "the direction in which those trees *lean*."

We were in a pine forest, and, almost without exception, the trees that declined from a perpendicular leaned towards the east. The severe winds through the up country of South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama, which start our trees and unsettle our fences, usually prevail from the west. That is the point also from which almost invariably come our thunder storms.

Robert replied that he had not. "I was at my uncle's, where I had never been before, in a newly settled part of the country. A small stream ran near his house, and bent considerably around his plantation. Down this stream I followed one day, in search of ducks, and walked several miles before thinking of home. My uncle's house lay due east, and instead of returning the way I went, I determined to take a shorter course through the woods. I had not gone far, however, before a fat squirrel jumped upon a log, within good shooting distance, curled his tail over his back, and sat there barking; he seemed to give me every invitation that a squirrel possibly could to shoot him, and I did so. But it was really curious to see the consequence. Such a barking of squirrels I never heard before in my life. They were all around me, jumping, shaking their tails, and *quaw-quawing* at such a rate, that it was almost like witchcraft. I killed as many as I could carry, and once more set out for home. But I had completely lost my course; the chase had taken off my mind, and I could tell neither which way I came into the wood, nor how I was to go out of it. My uncle's house I knew lay to the east, and the stream to the north. But which way was east, and which north? The sun was hidden,

and the trees were so close and thick, that the moss covered their large trunks on every side, and the limbs and bark for the same reason seemed to be of equal size all round. At last I spied a small tree, that was pretty well exposed to the sun, and the limbs of which were evidently larger, and the bark rougher on one side than on the other; there was also a beautiful tuft of green moss growing at its root, on the side opposite to the large limbs. These signs satisfied me; but to make assurance doubly sure, I cut into the tree far enough to ascertain that the thickest bark was on the roughest side. That one tree was my guide. I struck a straight course for home, and reached it without difficulty. Now, if you take these rules, you can guide yourself anywhere through these woods, in which you will never be more than three or four miles to the east of the sea-shore."

"Thank you, cousin," said Robert; "thank you sincerely. You have relieved my mind from the greatest embarrassment I have felt at the thought of roaming these dark woods alone. Your rules give me confidence; for the very trees that before caused my bewilderment shall now become my guides."

He took his gun, called his dog, and gave a look to Frank, in the expectation that he also would come. But Frank had listened quietly to the preceding conversation, and had as quietly made up his mind not to go. He sat beside the cage, watching the opossum, and took no notice of dog, gun, or look.

"Jump, Frank," said Robert, in a cheering tone; "I am ready to go. Let us see if we cannot find a deer."

"No, I thank you," he soberly replied; "I do not love to get lost. It does not feel pleasant. I had rather stay at home and pour water on cousin Harold's foot."

"Then stay," said Robert, in a disappointed tone; "I forgot that you were a baby."

Harold, however, who knew that Frank was an uncommon pedestrian, and that Robert preferred to have company, whispered to him, "He is not going to lose himself, Frank. I think, too, he will kill some deer, and who knows but he may find another fawn to keep Dora company." Frank seized his cap, and calling out, "Brother! brother! I am coming!" dashed off in pursuit. Fidelle started too, but they returned to tie her up, and to say to Mary that she must not be uneasy if they did not return by dinner-time, as they were unwilling to come without game; then taking some parched corn in their pockets in case of hunger, together with Frank's hatchet and matches, they again set off.

The first business was to visit the turkey baits; at one of which the corn and peas had all disappeared, with evident traces of having been eaten by turkeys. "What a pity we had not brought some more bait," remarked Robert; "Harold says that when they have once found food at a place, they are almost sure to return the next day to look for more. We must share with them our dinner of parched corn."

Renewing the bait, they proceeded in a straight course south, having for their guide the bright clouds that showed the place of the sun to the south-east. Frank was very anxious for Robert to kill some of the many squirrels that frolicked around them. "May be," said he, "if you shoot, they will quaw-quaw for you as they did for Cousin Harold, and then we can go home loaded." But Robert replied that this would be a useless waste of ammunition: that it would probably scare off the deer from the neighbourhood; and that, moreover, his gun was not loaded for such small game.

Hardly had the argument closed before Mum began to smell and snort, here and there, intent upon a confused trail. His motion became soon more steady, and he started off at a pace that made the hunters run to keep in sight. Afraid that at this rate Frank would give out, and that he himself would be too much out of breath to aim surely, or to creep cautiously upon the deer, Robert called out, "Steady, Mum!" The well-trained brute instantly slackened his speed, and keeping only about a rod ahead, went forward at a moderate walk. In this way they followed for a full quarter of a mile, when Robert observed him take his nose from the ground, and walk with noiseless step, keeping his eyes keenly directed forwards. He "steadied" him again by a half whispered command, and kept close at his heels. Soon he saw a pair of antlers peering above a distant thicket, and the brown side of a deer between the branches. Softly ordering Mum to "come in," and noticing that what little wind there was blew so as not to carry their scent to the deer, he said to Frank, "Buddy, if you will remain by this large poplar, I will creep behind yonder thicket, and see if I cannot get a shot. Will you be afraid?"

"No," he replied, "if you do not go too far away."

"I will not go out of hearing," Robert said, "and if you need anything, whistle for me, but do not call. Hide yourself behind this tree, and when you hear me shoot, come as soon as you please."

It was easy to cover his advance behind the dense foliage of a viny bower, until he was quite near. He paused to listen; the rustle of leaves and the sound of stamping feet were distinctly heard. A short but cautious movement gave him a commanding view of the ground. There were three deer feeding within easy reach of his shot. He sprung both barrels, and tried to be deliberate, but in spite of all resolution his heart jumped into his mouth, and his hand shook violently; he had what hunters call "the buck-ague." Steadying his piece against a stout branch, he aimed at the shoulders of the largest, and fired. It fell, with a bound forward. The other deer, instead of darting away, as he expected, turned in apparent surprise to look at the unusual vision of smoke and fire, accompanied by such a noise, when he took deliberate aim with a now steady hand, and fired at the head of the next largest, as it was in the act of springing away.

"Come, Frank! come!" he shouted.

Frank, however, had started at the first report, and was now running at the top of his speed. Robert rushed forward to dye his hand for the first time in the blood of so noble a victim; yet it made him almost shudder to hear the knife grate through the delicate flesh, and to see the rich blood gurgling upon the ground. Had it not been that such butchery was necessary to subsistence, he would have resolved at that moment to repeat it no more.

But what was next to be done? Here were two large deer lying upon the earth. Should he skin and cleanse them there, and attempt to carry home the divided quarters? or should he carry home one deer and return for the other? He decided upon the last. Before proceeding homewards, however, he blazed a number of trees, to show afar off the place of his game; then selecting a tree, as far as he could distinguish in his way, he went towards it, chopping each bush and sapling with his hatchet; and making a broad blaze upon this tree, he selected another in the same line, and proceeded thus until he reached the tent. He had learnt by one-half day's practice to thread the trackless forest with a steadiness of course and a confidence of spirit that were surprising to himself.

CHAPTER XXVI

CRUTCHES IN DEMAND--CURING VENISON--PEMMICAN--SCALDING OFF A PORKER'S HAIR WITH LEAVES AND WATER--TURKEY TROUGH--SOLITARY WATCHING--FORCE OF IMAGINATION--FEARFUL RENCOUNTER--DIFFERENT MODES OF REPELLING WILD BEASTS

Harold's ankle continued so painful whenever he attempted to move, that Sam advised him, the morning after the accident, to construct for himself a pair of crutches. "Make 'em strong and good, Mas Harol," said he, with a broad grin of satisfaction. "I hope by time you trow 'em away, I'll pick 'em up." This work occupied the two invalids, while Robert and Frank were engaged in their successful deer hunt.

When the venison was brought home, Harold assisted in various ways in preparing it for use; and also promised that if he was provided with the necessary means, he would see that all which was thereafter brought in should be properly cured. His favourite mode was by the process called *jerking*. The plan was this: A wig-wam was made, about five feet in diameter at the base, and five feet high,

leaving a hole at the top about two feet wide. A place for fire was scooped in the middle; and the pieces of venison were hung in the smoke that poured through the open top. Pieces an inch thick, when exposed at the same time to smoke and sunshine were perfectly cured in the course of a day. The hams required, of course, a longer time, and were all the better for a little salt. The *salting tub* was made of a fresh deer's skin, fleshy side up, supported by stakes so as to sag in the middle. A substitute for a *pickle barrel* was also devised in the course of time; this consisted of a deer's skin, stripped off whole, and rendered water-tight by stopping the holes; in this the meat was put, covered with a strong brine, and drawn up into a tree. When the visits of the flesh-fly were apprehended, the mouth of the sack was secured by a string. But the most convenient form in which the meat was cured was that known as *pemmican*. To prepare this the meat was jerked until perfectly dry, then pounded fine, and mixed with half its own weight of melted grease; after which it was packed away in skin bags, having the hair outwards. The pemmican could be eaten, like bologna sausage, either cooked or raw, and kept perfectly sweet as long as it was needed.

While describing these several modes of preparing and preserving their meat, it may not be amiss to mention also a method adopted by Harold for scalding off an opossum's hair without any of the usual appliances for heating the water. The opossum had been killed before it was known that the utensils for boiling were all in use and could not be spared. Robert was perplexed, for he knew that the hair "sets" as soon as the carcass is cold, and refuses to be drawn. But Harold replied with a smile,

"I have seen hogs scalded by being put into a deep puddle of water heated with red hot stones. All the water needed for so small an object as the opossum may be heated in a deer skin, hung like our salting tub over the fire. But I will show you a still easier plan."

He gathered a pile of dry leaves, with which he covered the body, and then poured on water until the pile was quite wet; after which he piled on a much larger quantity of dry leaves, which he set on fire. When the mass had burnt down, the hair of the opossum was found so thoroughly *steamed* by the surrounding heat, that it yielded as easily as if it had passed through the most approved process of the pork cleaning art.

Towards sunset Robert went to the turkey baits; the birds had returned to the place they had visited before, and eaten all the parched corn thrown there the second time. He renewed the bait, with this difference (made on Harold's suggestion)--that whereas he had formerly scattered the corn broad-cast, he now strewed it in a sort of trough, or shallow trench, made in the ground. This trench was made on a line proceeding straight from a place of concealment, selected within good shooting distance. Turkeys are greedy feeders; and when they find a

place baited as that was, they gather on each side of the trench, with their heads close together, trying each to obtain his share of the prize; and a person having a gun loaded with duck or squirrel shot, has been known to kill six or eight at a time, by firing among their interlocking heads.

An additional visit enabled Robert to determine that the hour of their coming was early in the morning; and this being the only other circumstance wanting to fix the time of his own coming to meet them, he used that opportunity to arrange to his fancy the place of his concealment. The trench was on a line with two short hedges of bamboo brier, diverging from each other in the shape of the letter V, having a place of egress at the angle. He closed the mouth of the V by planting a blind of evergreens, high as his head, and very close at the bottom; and as it was probable that he should be compelled to remain some hours in concealment, he made a seat, and opened through the blind a hole for observation.

On the following morning he was up and moving at the peep of day. Mary prepared him a cup of coffee, and by the time that there was light sufficient to follow the blazed track he was on the way. His course lay eastward, and through the opening branches glowed that beautiful star which he had often admired, Venus, the gem of the morning, "flaming upon the forehead of the dawn."

Frank begged hard to be allowed to go too, his confidence in Robert's woodsmanship having been greatly increased by the recent success; but Harold decided against him. He said that in turkey shooting the fewer persons there were present the better; that Robert himself must keep still as a mouse, and that well trained as Mum was, it would be better even for him to be left behind. Robert therefore departed alone, putting into his pocket a small volume of Shakespeare, to aid in whiling away the slow hours of his solitary watch.

On arriving at the spot his first act was to see that the bait was yet untouched. He took his seat, and continued for a long time peeping through the port hole, and listening with an attention so acute that he could hear the rush of his own blood along the throbbing arteries. But as the minutes passed, and no change occurred, not even the chirp of a bird or the bark of a squirrel enlivening the grim solitude, his excitement gradually gave way to weariness. He leaned his gun against the wall of vines, and drew out his book. It was the first volume, containing that magnificent drama, "The Tempest." He read rapidly the familiar scenes describing Ariel, the light, invisible spirit, and Caliban, the hideous son of the old hag, and Prospero, with his beautiful daughter, and the dripping refugees from the sea, and became so deeply absorbed as perfectly to forget where he was, until a slight rustling behind a briery thicket near the bait aroused his attention. Whatever the animal might have been, its step was very stealthy, and evidently approaching. Laying down the book, and grasping his gun, he peeped cautiously around; nothing was visible. Soon he heard a rattling upon the ground of falling

fragments, as if from some animal climbing a tree, and a grating sound like that of bark which is grasped and crushed.

"I wonder what that can be?" he mentally soliloquized. "Perhaps a large fox-squirrel climbing after acorns--but no, there is too much bark falling for that. It must be a squirrel barking a dead limb for worms. That's it! O, yes, that's it."

But it was no squirrel, and had Robert been more of a woodsman he would not have returned so quietly to his reading. Indeed, he had become more deeply interested in his book than in his business, and was glad of any excuse that allowed him to return to Prospero and the shipwrecked crew. He read a few pages more, and stopping to connect in his mind the disjointed parts of the story, his eye rested upon what appeared to be the bushy tail of a very large squirrel, lying upon a limb of the tree that overhung the bait.

"I knew it was a squirrel," said he to himself; "but he is a bouncer! How long his tail is! and how it moves from side to side like a cat's, when it sees a bird or a mouse that it is trying to catch. I wish I could see his body, but it is hidden by that bunch of leaves."

His imagination was so powerfully impressed with the graphic scenery of "The Tempest," that he could scarcely think of anything else. The idea in his mind at that moment was the ludicrous scene in which the drunken Stephano comes upon the queer bundle, made up of Caliban and Trinculo, lying head to head under the same frock, and appearing to his unsteady eyes like a monster with two pairs of legs at each end. As Robert looked into the tree, he almost laughed to catch himself fancying that he saw Caliban's head lying on the same limb on which lay the squirrel's tail, and staring at him with its two great eyes. Indeed he did see something. There was a veritable head resting there, and two great eyeballs were glaring upon him, and nothing but the irresistible influence of the scenes he had read deceived him for a moment with the idea that it was Caliban's.

A second and steady look would probably have revealed the truth; but for this he had not time. The welcome "twit! twit!" of the expected game caused him to look through his port hole, and a large turkey cock, accompanied by four hens, ran directly to the trench, and began to eat as fast as they could pick up the grains. Robert cautiously slipped his gun through the port hole, and took deliberate aim, confident that he could kill the five at one shot. But hesitating a moment whether he should commit such wholesale destruction, when they were already so well supplied with fresh meat, his gun made a slight noise against the leaves, which attracted the attention of the turkeys, and caused the hens to dart away. The gobbler, being the leader and protector of the party, stood his ground courageously, stretching his long neck full four feet high, looking in every direction, and then coming cautiously towards the blind to reconnoitre.

Robert had gained experience from his still hunting; and in this conjuncture

stood perfectly motionless, keeping his gun as immovable as the stiff branch of a dry tree. The bird was deceived. It returned quietly to the trench, and commenced feeding. Robert waited in the hope that it would be joined by another; but no other coming, he fired while it was picking up the last few grains, and killed it. The moment of pulling the trigger, he heard a rustle of leaves in the tree above the turkey, and the moment after the report of his gun a heavy fall upon the ground. As he rushed from his concealment to seize the fallen game, he was horrified to see an enormous beast of the cat kind, crushing the head of the bird in its mouth, while its paw pinioned the fluttering wings. It was a panther. It had crawled into the tree while Robert was reading. It was *its* tail he had mistaken for a squirrel's, and *its* head he had fancied was Caliban's. For half an hour it had been glaring upon him with its big eyeballs, waiting until he should pass near enough to be pounced upon.

The coming of the turkeys had distracted its attention; and being hungry, it had ceased to watch for its human victim, and resolved upon that which was surer. When Robert emerged from his concealment it turned upon him, dropped the mangled head from its bloody mouth, reversed the hair on both back and tail, showed its enormous fangs, and growled. Had he retreated from the field he might have escaped the terrible conflict that awaited him, for the panther, left to the peaceable possession of its prize, would probably have snatched it up and ran away. But his horror at the sight was so great that for a moment he was paralysed. He convulsively clutched his gun, and was on the point of firing almost without aim, when another fierce growl from the panther, that appeared to be gathering itself for a leap, brought him to his senses. He took deliberate aim between its eyes, and fired. It was a desperate chance, for the gun was loaded only with duck shot. The howl of rage and pain with which the panther bounded upon him, and the grinning horrible teeth that it showed, made his blood run cold. He clubbed his gun, prepared to aim a heavy blow upon its forehead, but, to his surprise, instead of leaping upon him, it sprang upon the thicket of briers, about three feet distant, and began furiously to tear on every side at perfect random.

He needed no better chance to escape from so dangerous a neighbourhood; and, in the moment of leaving, saw that both eyes of the animal had been shot away, and that the bloody humour was streaming down its face. He hurried on for a few steps, but fearing that the frantic beast might pursue him, he slipped behind a tree, and pouring hastily into his gun a charge of powder, which he rammed down as he ran, put upon that a heavy load of deer shot, and then made his way homewards.

Ere he had run one-half the distance, however, his fears began to subside. The panther, if not mortally wounded, was stone-blind; why should he not muster courage enough to complete the work, and thus perform a feat of which he might

be proud as long as he lived? In the midst of this cogitation, he heard before him the tramp of footsteps, and saw the glimmering of an animal that bounded towards him with rapid pace. Could this be the panther which had pursued him, and intercepted his flight! He levelled his piece in readiness for battle, and was preparing to pull trigger at the first fair sight, when he saw that, instead of a panther, it was Mum--good faithful Mum, broken loose from his confinement at home, and come in a moment of need to help his master. What a relief! Robert called him, patted him, hugged him, and then said, "Stop, Mum! I'll give you something to do directly. Just wait a minute, boy, till I load this other barrel; and with you to help me, I shall not be afraid of any panther, whether his eyes are in or out."

Mum had sagacity enough to know that his master was greatly excited, and he showed his own sympathy by whining, frisking about, and wagging his short tail. Robert loaded with dispatch, hurried back, keeping Mum directly before him, and holding his piece ready for instant use; but the panther had disappeared.

On reaching the field of battle, Mum's first act was to spring upon the prostrate bird, but finding it dead he let it lie; then perceiving the odour of the panther's track, his hair bristled, he followed the trail for a few steps, and returned, looking wistfully into his master's face. He evidently understood the dangerous character of the beast that had been there, and was reluctant to follow. Robert, however, put him upon the trail, and encouraged him to proceed. Mum undertook the business very warily. He went first to the brier on which the panther had last been seen; then in a zigzag course, that seemed to be interrupted by every bush against which the blinded beast had struck; finally he bristled up again, and gave signs of extreme caution. A few steps brought them to a fallen log, between two large branches of which Robert saw his formidable enemy, crouched and panting. He softly called in his dog. The panther pricked up its ears, and raised its head, as if trying to pierce through the impenetrable gloom. Robert came noiselessly nearer and nearer, until within ten paces, then deliberately taking aim, he discharged the whole load of bullets between the creature's eyes. It leaped convulsively forward, and died almost without a struggle.

[image]

Deliberately taking aim, he discharged the whole load of bullets between the creature's eyes

Soon as it was indubitably dead, Robert went forward to examine it. He turned it over, felt its bony legs and compact body; looked at the terrible fangs

from which he had made so narrow an escape, and, having satisfied his curiosity, attempted to take it upon his shoulder; but this was far beyond his strength--the panther was heavy as a large deer. He marked carefully the spot where it lay, and returning to the tree for his book and bird, hurried home, to tell the others of his perilous adventure.

Hardly had he come within sight, before Frank's quick eyes discerned him. "What!" said he, with a playful taunt, "only one turkey! I thought you would have had a house full, you staid so long and fired so often. Cousin Harold hardly knew what to make of it; he said he supposed you must have *wounded* a turkey; so I ran and let Mum loose to help you."

"I am glad you did," replied Robert, drawing a long breath, "for never in my life was I more in need of help."

"And you didn't get the other after all?"

"O, yes, all I aimed at. But something came near getting me, too. Where are Cousin Harold and sister?"

"In the tent."

Harold and Mary smiled with pleasure to see the fine bird on his shoulder, but could not understand the seriousness of countenance with which he approached. He related the particulars of his adventure, to which they listened with breathless attention. Mary turned very pale, Harold's eyes flashed fire, and Sam's white teeth shone in repeated laughs of admiration.

"How I wish I could have been with you," said Harold, looking mournfully at his lame foot.

"I wish you had been."

"That was a terrible moment, when you had fired your last barrel, and the panther was rushing upon you. You must have given up all for lost."

"No," replied Robert, "I felt myself tremendously excited, but had no idea of giving up."

"That is natural," said Harold. "No one ever gives up while there is anything to do. But do tell me, what did you think of? People can think so fast, and so powerfully, when brought to the pinch, that I like to hear all about their plans and thoughts. Tell me everything."

"From first to last," said Robert, smiling, "I thought of many things, but of none which I had time to execute, except to fire into his eyes, and club my gun. I first thought of running away, but not until I had stood so long that the panther seemed about to spring upon me. Then the idea occurred to me of trying the power of my eye, as father recommended about dogs; but I confess there was more power in his eye than mine, for I was badly frightened. My next thought was to take off my cap and rush upon him, as if that was some deadly weapon. I heard once of a lady in India, who saved herself and several others from a Bengal

tiger, by rushing at him with an umbrella which she kept opening and shutting as she ran. There was another plan still, of a negro in Georgia, who fought and killed a panther with his knife. But," he continued, "let us talk a moment of the carcass. What shall I do with it; leave it there or bring it to the tent?"

"O, bring it, bring it, by all means," Harold replied; "I doubt not Cousin Mary and Frank will help you."

Mary was not at all pleased with the prospect of such unladylike business, and in consequence gave Harold a look of disapproval, which he affected not to see. She went, nevertheless, and the panther was soon lying before the tent-door. The rest of the forenoon was spent in flaying it, which they did with the claws, tail and ears attached; for Robert had remarked, that being compelled to imitate Hercules in destroying wild beasts, he had a fancy to imitate him also in his couch. While thus engaged, Harold asked for the story of the negro.

"It is not much of a story," said Robert; "I thought of it merely in connection with the rest. The negro was going to his wife's house, which was some miles distant from the plantation, and which made it necessary for him to pass through a dark, dismal swamp. Usually he passed it by daylight, for it was infested by wild beasts; but being a daring fellow, he sometimes went by night, armed only with a long sharp knife. The last time he made the attempt he did not reach his wife's house, and his master went in search of him. Deep in the swamp he had met with a panther, and had a terrible fight. Traces of blood were plentiful, and deep tracks, where first one and then the other had made some unusual effort. Near at hand lay the panther, stabbed in nine places, and a little beyond lay the negro, torn almost to pieces. They had killed each other."

"I wonder," said Harold, "that he did not carry a torch; no wild beast will attack a person bearing fire."

"Are you sure of that?" Robert inquired.

"As sure as I can be, from having heard of it often, and tried it twice."

Robert begged for the particulars.

"I went with my father and two other gentlemen, on a hunting excursion among the mountains, where we camped out, of course. One of the gentlemen having heard that there were plenty of wolves in that region, and wishing, as he said, to have some fun that night, had rubbed gum assafoetida upon the soles of his boots, before leaving the tent for it is said that wolves are attracted by the smell of this gum, and will follow it to a great distance. Now, whether it was the smell of the assafoetida or of our game, I will not pretend to say, but the wolves came that night in such numbers that we could scarcely rest. They howled first on this side and then on that, and barked in such short quick notes, that one sounded like half a dozen. Our horses were terribly frightened; we could scarcely keep them within bounds; and our dogs ran slinking into the tent with every sign of

fear. The only plan by which we could sleep with comfort was by building a large fire, and keeping it burning all night."

"Did not the gentleman who was so fond of wolves go out after them?" asked Robert.

"O, yes, we all went, again and again, but the cunning creatures kept in the edge of the darkness, and when we approached on one side, they ran to the other. It was there I heard the other gentleman, who was esteemed a great hunter, remark, that all wild beasts are afraid of fire."

"I wonder why?"

"Night beasts are afraid I suppose, because they prowl in darkness; and as for the others, if they once feel the pain of fire they will be apt to keep out of its way."

"The other circumstance is this:--Last year I went on a night hunt, with some boys of my own age; and not only did we meet with very poor success, but for some hours were completely lost. About an hour before day I left the company, and returned home; for I had promised my mother to return by twelve o'clock. Before parting company, we heard a panther in the woods directly in my way, crying for all the world like a young child. The boys tried to frighten me out of my intention; but I told them that if they would only let me have a good torch, I should safely pass by a dozen panthers. It was full two miles home. The panther continued his cry until I came within a furlong, and then ceased. As I passed the piece of woods from which his voice appeared to come, I heard afar off the stealthy tread of something retiring, and saw two large eyes shining in the dark. I have always supposed that these were the eyes and tread of the panther, and that it was driven off by the torch."

CHAPTER XXVII

TURKEY-PEN--SUCKING WATER THROUGH OOZY SAND--EXPLORING TOUR--APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRY--"MADAME BRUIN"--SOLDIER'S REMEDY FOR CHAFED FEET--NIGHT IN THE WOODS--PRAIRIE--INDIAN HUT--FRUIT TREES--SINGULAR SPRING

It would be useless, and perhaps tedious, to trace thus day by day, and hour by hour, the history of our young friends. We will now pass over an interval of

nearly three weeks, from Saturday, November sixth, when Robert's contest with the panther occurred, to Wednesday, November twenty-fourth, when their affairs received another turn.

The only incident worth relating that occurred during this period, was the construction of a pen for entrapping turkeys. It was simply a covered enclosure, of ten or twelve feet square, with a deep trench communicating from the outside to the centre. This trench was made deep enough to allow a feeding turkey to walk under the side of the pen, and next the wall, inside, it was bridged over, so that the birds in running around the enclosure, after having entered, might not fall into the trench, and see their way out. This trap is planned with a knowledge of the fact, that though a turkey looks down when feeding, it never looks down when trying to escape. This is equally true of the quail or southern partridge, and perhaps of most of the gallinaceous birds. By means of this trap the boys took so many turkeys that they were at last weary of seeing them.

In the meantime Harold's ankle had become so nearly well, that for a week it had been strong enough for all ordinary purposes; and Sam's bones, though by no means fit to be used, were rapidly knitting, and gave promise of being all that broken bones can become in the course of a few weeks. No one had yet come to their rescue. Often had they gone, singly and together, to the flag-staff, and swept the watery horizon with their glass, but no helper appeared, and no sign. Robert and Mary had learned by this time to curb their impatience, and to wait in calmness the time when they should commence working upon their proposed boat.

From the first day that they found themselves shut up upon the island, Robert and Harold had meditated an exploration of the surrounding country, but had hitherto been prevented by various causes. Among these was Mary's excessive nervousness at the idea of being left alone, and particularly so after Robert's contest with the panther; but now she said, that with Fidelle to guard, and with Sam to shoot, exclusive of what she herself might do in case of an emergency, she gave her consent to the tour.

The stock of provision laid in by this time was quite respectable. Five deer had been killed, and their hams were now in the smoke, the company having in the meantime subsisted upon the other parts of the venison, turkeys from the pen, oysters, crabs, and fish. There were also fifty dried fish, two live turkeys, and four fat "pigs" (so called) in the cage, to say nothing of the stores brought from home. Before starting, the boys provided Mary with a large supply of wood for the kitchen and smoke-house, water also, and everything else which they could foresee as needful. They loaded the remaining guns with heavy shot, and laid them aside ready for use; and, moreover, offered to build for her a palisade around the tent, by driving down stakes, and wattling them with grape vines; but to this

last Mary objected, saying she was ashamed to be considered so great a coward.

It was broad daylight on the morning of Wednesday, the twenty-fourth day of November, when they set out upon their tour. Robert carried the wallet of provision, consisting of parched corn, jerked venison, and a few hard crackers of Mary's manufacture; in his belt he fastened a flat powder flask filled with water, being the best substitute he could devise for a canteen. Harold carried the blanket rolled like a wallet, and Frank's hatchet stuck in his belt.

Willing to ascertain the coastwise dimensions of the island, and also the approaches to it from sea, they directed their course along the hard smooth beach, occasionally ascending the bluff for the purpose of observing the adjacent country. Their rate of travelling was at first intentionally slow, for they were both pedestrians enough to know that the more slowly a journey is commenced, the more likely it is to be comfortably continued.

At the end of six miles they plainly discerned the southern extremity of the island, lying a mile beyond, and marked by a high bank of sand, thrown up in such profusion as almost to smother a group of dwarfish, ill-formed cedars. Beyond the bluff they saw the river setting eastward from the sea, and bordered on its further side with a dense growth of mangroves. Satisfied with this discovery, and observing that, after proceeding inland for a few miles, the river bent suddenly to the north, they turned their faces eastward, resolved to strike for some point upon the bank. The sterile soil of the beach, and its overhanging bluff, which was varied only by an occasional clump of cedars and a patch of prickly pears, with now and then a tall palmetto, that stood as a gigantic sentry over its pigmy companions, was exchanged as they receded from the coast, first for a thick undergrowth of low shrubs and a small variety of oak, then for trees still larger, which were oftentimes covered with vines, whose long festoons and pendant branches were loaded with clusters of blue and purple grapes. About midway of the island the surface made a sudden ascent, assuming that peculiar character known as "hammock," and which, to unpractised eyes, looks like a swamp upon an elevated ridge.

Before leaving the beach the boys had quenched their thirst at a spring of cool, fresh water, found by scratching in the sand at high water mark, but which they would not have been able to enjoy had it not been for a simple device of Robert's. The sand was so soft and oozy, that before the basin they had excavated was sufficiently full to dish from, its sides had fallen in. Harold had tried at several places, but failing in all, he hallooed to Robert, whom he had left behind, to know what had been his success.

"Come and see," was the reply. Harold went, but saw nothing.

"There is my spring," said Robert, pointing to the end of a reed like that of a pipe-stem, sticking out of the sand. "Suck at that," he continued, "and you will get all that you want."

Harold tried it, and rose delighted. "Capital!" he exclaimed; "but how do you keep the sand from rising with the water?"

Robert drew out the reed, and showed him a piece of cloth fastened as a strainer on its lower end. "I have often thus quenched my thirst when fishing on our sandy beaches, and have never found it to fail."

"It is exceedingly simple," remarked Harold. "I wonder I never saw it nor heard of it before."

"So do I," rejoined Robert; "and yet I question whether I should ever have heard of it myself, had it not been for the Hottentots."

Harold's eyes opened wide at the mention of Hottentots, and Robert went on to say, "A year or two since, while reading an account of the suffering of people in South Africa for the want of water, and their various devices for obtaining it, I was struck with the simplicity of one of their plans. On coming to a place where the water was near the surface, but where they could not dig a well, they would make a narrow hole a yard or more deep, and insert a small reed having a bunch of grass or moss tied around its lower end. This reed they buried, all except a short end left above ground, and packed the earth tightly around it. Then they sucked strongly at the open end, and it is said that, if the earth was sufficiently moist and if the soil was not too close, the water would soon run through the reed, cleansed of its mud and sand by passing through the rude filter attached to its lower end."

"Whoever may have been its author, it is an excellent device," said Harold. "I shall not forget it."

At noon the boys seated themselves under a heavy canopy of vines, and ate their frugal dinner in sight of a luscious-looking dessert, hanging in purple clusters above and around them, which in its turn they did not fail to enjoy.

Resuming their journey to the east, they proceeded about a mile further, when Mum, who had trotted along with quite a philosophic air, as if knowing that his masters were intent upon something other than hunting, was seen to dash forward a few steps, smell here and there intently, then with a growl of warning to come beside them for protection.

"That is a panther, I'll warrant," said Robert. "At least Mum acted exactly in that way the other day when I put him upon the panther's track. Had we not better avoid it?"

"By no means," replied Harold. "Let us see what the creature is. We are on an exploring tour, you know, and that includes animals as well as trees. A panther is a cowardly animal, unless it has very greatly the advantage; and if you could conquer one with a single load of duck-shot when alone and surprised, surely we two can manage another."

"Yes," said Robert, "but I assure you, my success was more from accident than skill; and I would rather not try it again. However, it will do no harm to

push on cautiously, and see what sort of neighbours we have."

They patted their dog, and gave him a word of encouragement; the brave fellow looked up, as if to remonstrate against the dangerous undertaking, but on their persisting went cheerfully upon the trail; he took good care, however, to move very slowly, and to keep but little in advance of the guns. The two boys walked abreast, keeping their pieces ready for instant use, and proceeded thus for about fifteen minutes, when their dog came to a sudden halt, bristled from head to tail, and showed his fangs with a fierce growl; while from a thicket, not ten paces distant, there issued a deep grumbling sound, expressive of defiance and of deadly hate. Harold stooped quickly behind the dog, and saw an enormous she bear, accompanied by two cubs that were running beyond her, while she turned to keep the pursuers at bay.

"We must be cautious, Robert," said Harold; "a bear with cubs is not to be trifled with. We must either let her alone, or follow at a respectful distance. What shall we do? She has a den somewhere near at hand, and no doubt is making for it."

Robert was not very anxious for an acquaintance with so rough a neighbour, but before the fearless eye of his cousin every feeling of trepidation subsided, and he was influenced only by curiosity, which, it is well known, becomes powerfully strong when spiced with adventure. They followed, governing themselves by the cautious movements of their dog, and able to catch only a casual glimpse of the bear and her cubs, until they came within thirty paces of a poplar,[#] five feet in diameter, with a hollow base, into which opened a hole large enough to admit the fugitives.

[#] Tulip tree (Liriodendron tulipifera), called poplar at the South.

"There, now, is the country residence of Madame Bruin," said Robert, stopping at a distance to reconnoitre the premises. "Shall we knock at her door, and ask how the family are?"

"I think not," replied Harold, "the old lady is rather cross sometimes, and I suspect from the tones of her voice she is not in the sweetest humour at the present. Take care, Robert, she is coming! Climb that sapling! Quick! Quick!"

The boys each clambered into a small tree, and as soon as they were well established, Harold remarked, "Now let her come, if she loves shot. A bear cannot climb a sapling. Her arms are too stiff to grasp it; she needs a tree large enough to fill her hug."

But Madame Bruin, like the rest of her kin, was a peaceable old lady, not

at all disposed to trouble those that let her alone, and on the present occasion she had two sweet little cherubs, whose comfort depended upon her safety; so she contented herself with going simply to her front door, and requesting her impertinent visitors to leave the premises. This request was couched in language which, though not English, nor remarkably polite, was perfectly intelligible.

"I suppose we shall have to go now," said Harold; "it will not be civil to keep prying into the old lady's chamber. But when Sam is able to join us, we can come prepared to make bacon of her and pets of her cubs."

They called off the dog, patted him in praise of his well-doing, and then retreated, blazing the trees all the way from the poplar to the river.

Several of these last miles Robert had walked with increasing painfulness; his feet were so much chafed as to be almost blistered.

"Stop, Harold, and let us rest here," he said, on reaching a fallen log. "I wish to try that soldier's remedy for chafed feet."

"What soldier's?" Harold inquired.

"One of those at Tampa," replied Robert. "I heard several of them relate, one day, how much they had suffered in marching with blistered feet, when one of the number remarked that whenever the signs of chafing occurred he had relieved himself by shifting his socks from one foot to the other, or by turning them inside out. Upon this another stated that he was generally able to escape all chafing by rubbing the inside of his socks with a little soap before setting out. And another still added that he had often *cured* his blistered feet, in time for the next day's march, by rubbing them with spirits mixed with tallow dropped from a candle into the palm of his hand. Before leaving home, today, I took the precaution to soap the inside of my socks; but now I shall have to try the efficacy of the other remedy; and sorry shall I be if there should be need for the third plan, because we have neither the tallow nor the spirits necessary for the experiment."

Robert gave the proposed plan a trial, and found, to his delight, that it saved him from all further discomfort.

Nothing more of interest occurred that day. On leaving the river, which, after making a great sweep to the south-east, came so near the bank on which they stood, as to afford a good landing for boats, they turned into the woods and kept a northern course parallel with the shore. About sunset they stopped beside a large log of resinous pine, which they selected for the place of their encampment that night, intending to set the log a-fire. Around it they cleared an irregular ring, which they fired on the inner side, thus providing a place for their sleeping free from insects, and from which fire could not escape into the surrounding forest. Next, they made themselves a tent of bushes, by bending down one sapling, fastening its top to the side of another, and then piling against it a good supply of evergreens, inclined sufficiently to allow a narrow space beneath. A neighbouring

tree supplied them with moss for a superb woodland mattress, and while Robert was preparing that Harold collected a quantity of pine knots, to be reserved in case their fire should decline.

By the time these preparations were completed darkness closed around. Jupiter, at that time the evening star, glowed brightly from the western sky, while Orion, with his brilliant belt, gleamed cheerily from the east. The boys sat for some time luxuriating in their rest, listening to the musical roar of their fire, and watching the red glare which lighted up the sombre arches of the forest; then uniting in their simple repast, and giving Mum his share, they lay down to sleep, having committed themselves to the care of Him who slumbers not, and who is as near his trustful worshippers in the forest as in the city.

There is a wild pleasure in sleeping in the deep dark woods. The sense of solitude, the consciousness of exposure, the eternal rustle of the leafy canopy, or else its perfect stillness, broken only by the stealthy tread of some beast of night, or the melancholy hooting of a restless owl, give a variety which is not usual to civilized men, but which, being of a sombre character, requires for its enjoyment a bold heart and a self-relying spirit.

The boys retired to rest soon after supper, and tried to sleep; but the novelty of their circumstances kept them awake. They rose from their mossy couch, sat by the fire, and talked of their past history and of their future prospects. All around was perfect stillness. Their voices sounded weak and childlike in that deep forest; and embosomed as they were in an illuminated circle, beyond whose narrow boundary rose an impenetrable wall of darkness, they felt as if they were but specks in the midst of a vast and lonely world.

At last their nervous excitement passed away. They retired once more to bed, having their guns within reach, and Mum lying at their feet. The roar of the blaze and crackle of the wood composed them to sleep; and when they next awoke, daylight had spread far over the heavens, and the stars had faded from sight. They sprang lightly to their feet, and before the sun appeared were once more on their way northward, along the banks of the river.

Their march was now slow and toilsome. In the interior a hammock of rich land, covered with lofty trees, matted with vines, and feathered with tall grass, impeded their progress; while near the river bay-galls, stretching from the water's edge to the hammocks, fringed with gall-berries, myrtles and saw-palmettoes, and crowded internally with bays, tupeloes, and majestic cypresses (whose singular looking "knees" peeped above the mud and water like a wilderness of conical stumps), forced them to the interior. Their average rate of travel was scarcely a mile to the hour.

Several herds of deer darted before them as they passed, and once, while in the hammock, where the growth was very rank, they were almost within arm's

length.

About noon they emerged into an open space, which Harold pronounced to be a small prairie; but in the act of stepping into it, rejoiced at a temporary relief from the viny forest, he grasped the arm of his cousin, and drew him behind a bush, with a hurried,

"Back! back! Look yonder!"

Robert gave one glance, and stepped back into concealment as quickly as if twenty panthers were guarding the prairie. There stood an Indian hut.

The boys gazed at each other in dismay; their hearts beat hard, and their breath grew short. Were there Indians then upon the island, and so near them? What might not have happened to Mary and Frank? But a close scrutiny from their bushy cover enabled them to breathe freely. There was a hut, but it was evidently untenanted; grass grew rank about the doorway, and the roof was falling to decay. It had been deserted for years.

The boys went boldly to it, and entered. Rain from the decayed and falling roof had produced tufts of grass in the mud plaster of the walls. In the centre was a grave, banked with great neatness, and protected by a beautifully arched pen of slender poles. At the door was a hominy mortar, made of a cypress block, slightly dished, and having a narrow, funnel-shaped cavity in its centre. Upon it, with one end resting in a crack of the wall, lay the pestle, shaped like a maul, and bearing the marks of use upon that end which white men would ordinarily regard as the handle. Overhanging the house were three peach trees, and around it the ground was covered with a profusion of gourds of all sizes, from that which is used by many as a pocket powder-flask to that which would hold several gallons. Beyond the house, and on the edge of the prairie, was a close growth of wild plums.

"This place," said Harold, musing, "must have belonged to some old chief. The common people do not live so comfortably. It is likely that he continued here after all others of his tribe had gone; and when he died, his children buried him, and they also went away. Poor fellow! here he lies. He owned a beautiful island, and we are his heirs."

"Peace to his ashes!" ejaculated Robert.

They looked sadly upon the signs of ruin and desolation. It always makes one sad to look upon a spot where our kind have dwelt, and from which they have passed away; it is symbolic of ourselves, and the grief we feel is a mourning over our own decay.

It was now twelve o'clock, and they began to feel the demands of appetite. Harold proposed to search longer, in hope of finding a spring of fresh water. "I am sure," said he, "there must be one hereabouts, and we shall find it exceedingly convenient in our frequent hunts."

They searched for nearly half an hour in vain; and as they were on the point

of giving up, Harold called out, "I have found it! Come here, Robert, and see what a beauty!" Robert hastened to the shallow ravine which terminated the eastern end of the prairie. Not two steps below its green margin was a real curiosity of its kind--a rill of clear, cool-looking water, issuing from the hollow base of a large tupelo[#] tree. It was a freak of nature, combining beauty, utility and convenience. The water was as sweet as it was clear.

[#] The black gum of the swamps, having, like all trees that grow in water, a spreading, and generally a hollow base.

Having quenched their thirst at this beautiful fountain, and prepared to open their wallet of provisions, Robert's eye was attracted by a glimpse of a rich golden colour, on the edge of the prairie. They went to it, and found several varieties of orange trees, bearing in great profusion, and among them were limes, whose delicate ovals asked only to be tried. Beneath these trees they dined, and afterwards plucked their fragrant dessert from the loaded branches. Then they filled their pockets with the different varieties, and started homewards.

It was scarcely a mile from these orange trees to the first that they had discovered; and thence only three miles home. They reached the tent late in the afternoon. All were rejoiced to see them. Frank made himself merry, as usual, at their expense--laughing now that two hunters should be absent two whole days, and bring back only a few wild oranges. Mary said she had missed them very much, especially when night came on, but that everything had been smooth and pleasant; she had seen no panthers, and had not even dreamed of any.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PLANS--VISIT TO THE PRAIRIE--DISCOVERIES--SHOE MAKING--WATERFOWL

The severe exercise of the two preceding days was more than Harold's ankle, in its state of partial recovery, could endure without injury. For several days afterwards he was compelled to rest it from all unnecessary labour, and to relieve its pain by

frequent and copious applications of cold water.

Sam's wounded limbs were rapidly regaining strength, and he insisted that they were well enough to be used; but Robert refused to indulge him.

"We must risk nothing in the case," said he. "It is so important to have you able to help us build our boat, that I think you had better continue in bed one week too long than leave it one day too soon. You must be content to rest your arm for full five weeks, and your leg for six or seven."

Mary and Frank had listened with deep interest to the account which the boys gave of the old Indian settlement, with its open prairie, vine covered forest, orange grove, and sparkling spring; and begged so earnestly for the privilege of accompanying them on their next visit, that they gave their consent. The only difficulty foreseen in the case, was that of leaving Sam alone; but when this was made known to him, he removed all objection by saying:

"Wuddah gwine hu't me?[#] Jes load one gun, and put um by my side. I take care o' myself."

[#] What is going to hurt me?

The object of their visit was not one of mere enjoyment. They had waited for deliverance until they were convinced that it was vain to rely upon anything except their own exertions. It was now between five and six weeks since they had landed upon the island. There had been some strange fatality attending all the efforts that they were sure had been made on their behalf, and now they must try to help themselves.

The exploration had resulted in the discovery of beautiful timber, of every size, fit for boats, and near the water's edge. They well knew it would be a herculean task for persons of their age and education, and possessed of so few tools, to dig out, from these trees, a boat large enough to carry them all home; but they were compelled to do this, or to remain where they were. Having consulted with Sam, upon whose judgment in matters of work they relied far more than on their own, they resolved to build not one large boat but two of moderate dimensions, which might if necessary be lashed firmly together; and for this purpose to select near the water two cypresses of three feet diameter, which should be felled as soon as possible. Their visit to the prairie was for the purpose of selecting these trees, in the low ground near the river.

The four set out in fine spirits early on the morning of Tuesday, November 30th, and continued their walk direct and without incident to the Indian hut. Notwithstanding the gloomy association of the solitary grave inside the deserted

house, Mary and Frank were captivated with the wild beauty of the scene. The soft green grass of the prairie--the magnificent wall of forest trees enclosing the peaceful plain--the peach trees over the hut--the oranges and the limes glancing through their dark green leaves--and the bright bubbling spring that flowed so singularly from its living curb--all combined to enchant them. It was so delightful a contrast to the bare and sterile sand of their present encampment, that they plead at once for a removal there. This, of course, had occurred to the minds of the others also; but there were two serious objections to it. One was that here they would be out of sight of vessels passing at sea; and the other (which they kept to themselves) was that here they should be more in danger from wild beasts. They replied that they also preferred the prairie, but that they could not remove until Sam was better able to travel.

Having enjoyed to their satisfaction the view of the hut and its premises, Harold took Frank, and, followed by Fidelle, went in one direction, while Robert and Mary, with Mum, went in another, to search for trees suitable in size and location for their boats. In the course of an hour they returned, having marked a large number, and at the same time having added to their knowledge of the resources of the island. Harold discovered a fine patch of Coontah or arrowroot, from which a beautiful flour can be manufactured; and hard by a multitude of plants, with soft velvet-like leaves, of three feet diameter, having a large bulbous root resembling a turnip, and which Robert pronounced to be the tanyah, a vegetable whose taste is somewhat like that of a mealy potato. The other company went to the river, where Robert discovered an old boat landing, on one side of which was a large oyster bank, and on the other a deep eddy of the stream, in which trout and other fish were leaping about a fallen tree. Mary's discovery was more pleasant than useful. It was a bed of the fragrant calamus or sweet flag, from which she gathered a handful of roots, and washing them clean, brought them as a present to the others. Frank was quite chagrined to see that he had discovered nothing new or valuable, and he did not recover his equanimity for some minutes. While the seniors lingered cheerfully around the remains of their dinner, discussing the merits of their delightful island and the prospect of their return home, Mary suddenly inquired:

"But where is Frank? I have not seen him for half an hour."

Nor had any one else; for, unsatisfied with only one orange allowed him for dessert, while there were so many on the trees, and secretly hoping to find something valuable to announce, he had quietly slipped away, and had stealthily climbed one of the orange trees, from which he plucked an orange for each of his four pockets, then with Fidelle at his side he had strolled a little farther into the forest, eating as he went.

The boys, startled by Mary's question, sprang instantly to their feet, re-

alizing vividly the danger to which he was exposed from wild beasts, but of which they had said nothing to him or to her. Scarcely, however, had their halloo sounded among the trees, than they saw him and his faithful companion approaching leisurely through the small thicket of wild plums.

"You thoughtless little boy," said Robert, upbraidingly; "why did you go off by yourself in these dangerous woods? Did you not know they are full of bears and panthers?"

"No, I didn't," Frank replied.

"Well, I now tell you that they are," continued Robert, "and that you must never again go there unless one of us is with you. But what took you there this time?"

"Humph," grunted Frank; "don't you suppose I want to find something new and good as well as the rest of you? and I have found it, too."

"Indeed," said Harold; "what is it, Frank?"

"You must all guess," he answered, looking very proud, "all of you guess. What is the best thing in the world?"

"I will say," answered Mary, "that one of the best things in the world is a little boy who always tries to do right."

"But it is no boy," Frank continued; "it is something sweet. Guess the sweetest thing in the world."

"I think," said Robert, inclined to amuse himself, "that the sweetest *looking* things in the world are those pretty little girls we used to meet on King Street, in Charleston."

"No, no," said Frank; "it is neither boys nor girls, but something to eat. What is the sweetest thing in the world to eat?"

"If we were in town," Harold replied, "I should guess candy and sugar-plums; but, as we are in the wild woods, I guess honey."

"Yes, that's it," said Frank, triumphantly; "I have found a bee-tree."

"And why do you think it is a bee-tree?" asked Mary, incredulously.

"Because I saw the bees," he replied, in confident tones.

"Why, Frank," said Robert, laughing, "the bees you saw may have their hives miles and miles away."

"No, they have not," Frank stoutly maintained. "I have seen them going and coming out of their own hole just as they do at home."

"That sounds very much as if Frank is right, after all," argued Harold; "let us go and see for ourselves. But how came you to find the tree, Frank?"

"While I was eating my orange," he replied, "a bee lit on my hand, and began to suck the juice there. I was not afraid of him, for I knew that he would not sting me if I did not hurt him; and more than that, I always love to look at bees. Well, he sucked till he had got juice enough, then he flew right up into a tree a little

way off, and went into a hole. While I was looking at that hole, I saw many other bees going in or coming out; and then I knew that it was a bee-tree, because I had heard Riley talk about them at Bellevue. And, Cousin Harold, did you not put up some brimstone for taking bee-trees?"

"That I did, my dear little cousin," answered Harold, pleased with this unexpected allusion. "I have no doubt, from what you say, that you have found a real bee-tree; and, in that case, you have beat us all. Take us to see it."

They all went in joyous mood, and sure enough there was a good sized tree, with a knot-hole about twenty feet above ground, with plenty of bees passing in and out of it. The smell, too, of honey was decidedly strong, showing that the hive was old and plentifully stored.

It may be as well to state here, as elsewhere, that before many days the tree was felled, and that it supplied them with such an abundance of honey that a portion of it was, at Harold's suggestion, stowed away in skin bags, hair side outward. Some of it was beautifully white and clear. This was kept in the comb. The remainder was strained, and the wax was moulded into large cakes for future use. The bees, poor creatures! were all suffocated with the fumes of burning sulphur thrown into the hollow of the tree before it was opened. A few recovered, and for days hovered around their ruined home, until finally they all perished. It made Frank's kind heart very sad to see them, and several times he was stung while watching their movements and trying to help them.

After spending a delightful day, they returned about sunset to the tent. Sam's white teeth glistened when they approached the door. It had been a lonely day with him, but their return compensated for his solitude.

From this time forth the boys had before their minds a fixed object to be accomplished--the felling of those trees, and converting them into boats. But what should be the plan of their procedure while engaged in the work? They could go every morning, and return every evening--a distance altogether of eight miles; or they could spend several nights in succession at the prairie, leaving Frank and Mary with Sam; or they could remove everything to the place of their labour. As to the first two of these plans, it was so manifestly improper to leave the two younger ones for hours and days together, in a wild country, infested with wild beasts, and unprotected, except by a lame, bedridden negro, who was unable to protect himself, that they did not entertain them for a moment. It was finally resolved to delay their regular operations until the next week, by which time they hoped to be able, partly by water and partly by land, to transport everything, and take up their permanent abode at the prairie.

With this conclusion, they set about those little preparations which they could foresee as being necessary to an undivided use of their time after entering upon their work. Their clothes, and particularly their shoes, began to give signs

of decay. Frank's shoes had for some time been gaping incontinently at the toes, looking for all the world, Sam said, as if they were laughing.

Harold, foreseeing the necessity before it occurred, had put some deer-skins in soak, wrapped up in lime made from burnt oyster shells; and after removing the hair loosened by this means, had stretched them in the sun, and softened them by frequent applications of suet. The skins were ready now for use; and as soon as it was determined to delay their visit to the prairie, he brought one of them to the tent, and calling to Frank, said,

"Lend me your foot a minute, Master Frank, and I will give you a pair of moccasins."

"Not the *snakes*, I hope," replied Frank.

"No, but something of the same name," said Harold; "I am going to turn shoemaker, and make you a pair of Indian shoes. I need a pair myself."

"And so do I--and I!" echoed Robert and Mary.

"Indeed, at this rate," said Harold, "we may as well all turn shoemakers, and fit ourselves out in Indian style."

Harold planted Frank's foot upon the leather, which he drew up close around it, and marked at the heel, toe, and instep. He then cut it according to the measure, and there being but one short seam at the heel, and another from the toe to the instep, the sewing was soon finished. Frank tried it on, and for a first attempt the fit was very good. The fellow to this was barely completed, before two reports of Robert's gun, following in quick succession, came lumbering down the river. Fidelle pricked up her ears, and Harold, recalling vividly the panther scene, gave her the word to "hie on," and seizing his own gun followed rapidly along the shore. He had not proceeded far before a turn in the bluff revealed the figure of Robert, moving about the beach, and throwing at something in the water. He saw, too, that when Fidelle came up, Robert patted her, and pointing to the river, she plunged in and brought out a dark looking object, which she laid on a pile already at his feet. Arriving at the spot, he saw six water-fowl, between the size of a duck and a goose, of a kind entirely new to him, and which Robert assured him were brant.

"O Harold!" Robert exclaimed, "the shore was lined with them. I crept behind the bluff and killed four at my first shot, and three at my second, though one of them fell in the marsh and is lost. A little further up was a large flock of mallards, feeding upon the acorns of the live oak. I could have killed even more of them than of these, but I preferred the brant."

"You startled me," said Harold; "I did not know you had left the tent until I heard your gun, and then fearing you had got into another panther scrape, I dispatched Fidelle to your aid."

"She was exactly what I wanted, though I am thankful to say for a pleasanter

purpose. See how fat these birds are!"

They gathered up the game, and returned to the tent. All were rejoiced at the new variety of provisions, for they had begun to weary of the old. The brant proved quite as pleasant as Robert anticipated, and alternated occasionally with wild ducks, constituted for a long time an important addition to their stores.

For two days they were occupied with their new art of shoe making, and so expert did they become, that Harold said he doubted whether old Torgah himself could make much better moccasins than those manufactured by themselves. There was one improvement, however, which they made upon the usual Indian mode--a stout sole, made of several thicknesses of the firmest part of the leather as a defence against thorns and cock-spurs, so abundant in the sandy soil of the coast.

CHAPTER XXIX

REMOVAL TO THE PRAIRIE--NIGHT ROBBERY--FOLD--DANGEROUS TRAP--MYSTERIOUS SIGNALS--BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT

On Monday morning, the wind blew so favourably up the river, that even before the tide began to rise, the young movers had loaded their raft, prepared a rude sail, and were ready to start. The raft which had been constructed for the purpose of rescuing Sam, had been originally so small, and the logs were now so thoroughly soaked with water, that to make it carry what they wished at their first load they were compelled to add to its dimensions. But this did not detain them long, and after all was completed, and the baggage stowed away, Sam, by the help of Harold's crutches, hobbled to the beach, and seated himself at the helm, while Harold took the oars, and Robert, Mary and Frank went by their well marked path through the woods, to meet them at the orange landing.

The passage by water occupied nearly three hours, and when the clumsy float slowly approached the shore, Harold could see through the narrow strip of woodland, that Robert had felled two palmettoes on the edge of the other river, and was now engaged in cutting them up.

"Can it be, Robert," he asked, on landing, "that some bird of the air has carried to you the message I wanted to send? Are you not preparing another raft?"

"I am," he replied. "It occurred to me that if we could complete this raft by

the turn of the tide, we might take the load to the *prairie landing*, and yours might be floated hack to the old encampment for another cargo."

The idea was so valuable, that the boys scarcely allowed themselves time to eat or to rest until it was accomplished; and when at last the tide was seen moving towards the sea, they separated, Robert, Mary, and Sam going to the prairie landing, where they soon had the tent spread, and a fire burning; and Harold and Frank floating back to the place of their former residence, where they secured the raft, and calling Nanny, Dora, and the kids, returned overland to join the company at the new home.

For several days they were occupied with the labour of transporting their baggage, and fitting up their present abode with comforts and conveniences. The tent was not established at the landing where it was pitched the first night, but on the edge of the prairie, a furlong distant, and within a stone's throw of the spring.

On the third night after their removal, they experienced a loss which caused them to feel both sad and anxious. Nanny and her kids, having no place provided for them, had selected a nice retreat under the shelter of a mossy oak, and made that their lounging place by day, and their sleeping place by night. At the time referred to the boys had just retired to bed, when they heard one of the kids bleating piteously, and its cry followed by the tramp of the others running to the tent for protection. Harold and Robert sprang to their guns, and calling the dogs, seized each a burning brand, and hurried in the direction of the kid, whose wail of pain and fear became every moment more faint, until it was lost in the distance. The depredator was without doubt a panther. Such a circumstance was calculated to dishearten the boys exceedingly; for it forewarned them that not only were they likely to lose all their pets, but that there was no safety to themselves, and particularly none to Frank, if he should incautiously straggle into a panther's way. They called Nanny to a spot near the tent, fastened her by the dog's chain to a bush, threw a supply of wood on the fire sufficient to burn for some hours, and retired to bed sad and uneasy. Returning from their unsuccessful sally, Harold significantly shook his head, and said, "I will be ready for him before he has time to be hungry again."

There was no other disturbance that night. Frank was asleep at the time of the accident, and knew nothing of it until the next morning, when seeing Nanny fastened near the tent, he asked why that was, and where was the other kid. "Poor Jinny!" he exclaimed, on hearing of its fate (the kids, being a male and female, had been called Paul and Virginia). "Poor Jinny! So you are gone!" He went to Nanny, the chief mourner, and patting her smooth side said, in a pitying tone, "Poor Nanny! Ain't you sorry for your daughter? Only think, Nanny, that she is eaten up by a panther!" Nanny looked sorrowful enough, and replied, "Baa!" But whether that meant, "I am so sorry my daughter is dead," or, "I wish you would

loose my chain, and let me eat some of this nice grass," Frank could not determine. After a breakfast, by no means the most cheerful, Harold said,

"Robert, we must make a picket fence for the protection of these poor brutes. But as I have a particular reason for wishing some fresh venison before night, I want to arrange matters so that either you or I shall go out early enough to be sure of obtaining it."

Robert urged him to go at once, but disliking the appearance of avoiding labour, he preferred to remain, and aid them through the most laborious part of the proposed work. The palisade was made of strong stakes, eight or ten feet long, sharpened at one end, and driven into a narrow trench, which marked the dimensions of the enclosure. Harold assisted to cut and transport to the spot the requisite number of stakes; and shortly after noon took Frank as his companion, and left Robert and Sam to complete the work. He had not been gone more than an hour and a half, before Robert heard the distant report of a heavily loaded gun, in the direction of the spot where the brant and ducks had been shot.

"Eh! eh!" said Sam, "Mas Harrol load he gun mighty hebby for a rifle!"

"Yes," said Robert, "and he has chosen a very poor weapon for shooting ducks."

The workmen were too intently engaged to reflect that the report which they heard could not have proceeded from a rifle. In the course of half an hour another report, but of a sharper sound, was heard much nearer, and appearing to proceed from the neighbourhood of the orange-trees, on the tongue of land. Robert now looked inquiringly at Sam, and was about to remark, "That gun cannot be Harold's--it has not the crack of a rifle;" but the doubt was only momentary, and soon passed away. Long afterwards the familiar sound of Harold's piece was heard in the west, and a little before sunset Harold and Frank appeared, bearing a fat young deer between them.

"That looks nice; but you have been unfortunate, Harold," said Robert, who having finished the pen, and introduced into it Nanny and the two young ones, had wiped his brows, and sat down to rest.

"Why so?"

"In getting no more."

Harold looked surprised, but considering the remark as a sort of compliment to his general character, returned,

"O, that must be expected sometimes. But come, Robert, if you are not too weary, I shall be glad of your assistance in a little work before dark. I wish to post up a notice here, that night robbers had better keep away."

By their united efforts they succeeded in constructing a very simple though dangerous trap, which Harold said he hoped would give them a dead panther before morning. He laid Riley's rifle upon two forked stakes, about a foot from the

ground, and fastened it so that any movement forwards would bring the trigger against an immovable pin, and spring it. He then tied a tempting piece of venison to a small pole, which was bound to the rifle in a range with the course of the ball. And to make assurance doubly sure, he drove down a number of stakes around the bait, so that nothing could take hold of it, except in such direction as to receive the load from the gun.

"Now," said he, after having tried the working of his gun, by charging it simply with powder and pulling at the pole, as he supposed a wild beast would pull at the bait, then loading it with ball and setting it ready for deadly use--"Now, if there is in these woods a panther that is weary of life, I advise him to visit this place to-night."

The dogs were tied up, and the work was done. So long as the boys were engaged in making and setting their trap their minds were absorbed in its details, and they conversed about nothing else. But when that was finished, Harold referred to Robert's remark about his hunting, and said, "I was unfortunate, it is true, but it was only in going to the wrong place; for I got all that I shot at. But what success had you, for I heard your gun also."

"My gun!" responded Robert, "no, indeed. I heard two guns up the river, and supposed you were trying your skill in shooting ducks with a rifle."

Harold stopped, and stared at him in the dim twilight. "Not your gun, did you say? Then did Sam go out?"

"No. He was working steadily with me, until a few minutes before you returned."

The boys exchanged with each other looks of trouble and anxiety. "Did you hear any gun in reply to mine?" Harold asked. Robert replied he had not.

"Then," said Harold, in a voice tremulous with emotion, "I am afraid that our worst trouble is to come; for either there are Indians on the island, or our friends have come for us, and we have left no notice on our flag-staff to tell them where we are."

Robert wrung his hands in agony. "O, what an oversight again! when we had resolved so faithfully to give every signal we could devise. I'll get my gun! It may not be too late for an answer."

He ran with great agitation into the tent, and brought out his gun, but hesitated. "What if those we heard were fired by enemies, instead of friends?"

"In that case," replied Harold, "we must run our risk. If those were Indian guns, it will be vain to attempt concealment. They have already seen our traces; and if they are bent on mischief, we shall feel it. Let us give the signal."

They fired gun after gun, charging them with powder only, and hearing the echoes reverberate far away in the surrounding forest; but no sound except echoes returned. The person who fired those mysterious guns had either left the island,

or was indisposed to reply.

Many were the speculations they now interchanged upon the subject, and gravely did the two elder boys hint to each other, in language intelligible only to themselves, that there was now more to fear than to hope. They ate their supper in silence, and Mary and Frank went sorrowfully to bed. Robert, Harold and Sam sat up late, after the lights were extinguished, watching for the dreaded approach of Indians, and devising various plans in case of attack. At last they also retired, taking turns to keep guard during the whole night. All was quiet until near morning; when, in the midst of Sam's watch, they were aroused by hearing near at hand the sharp report of a rifle. In an instant the excited boys were on their feet, and standing beside their sentry, guns in hand, prepared to repel what they supposed to be an Indian attack. But Sam sung out in gleeful tone:

"No Injin! no Injin! but de trap. Only yerry[#] how he growl! I tell you he got de lead!"

[#] Yerry, hear.

The boys hastily kindled a torch, loosed the dogs, ran to the trap, and found, not a panther indeed, but a large wild cat, rolling and growling in mortal agony. The dogs sprang fiercely upon it, and in less than two minutes it lay silent and motionless, its keen eye quenched, and its once spasmed limbs now softly flexible in death. They took it up. It was nearly as large as Mum, being quite as tall, though not so heavy. Before they had ceased their examinations the grey streak of dawn gleamed above the eastern woods, and instead of retiring to rest again, as their weariness strongly prompted, they prepared for the duties of the opening day.

These duties appeared to be so contradictory, that they scarcely knew what plan to pursue. It was clear that some one or more should go without delay to the coast, to ascertain whether their friends were or had been there. But who should go, and who should stay? If there were Indians abroad, it would be dangerous to divide their little force; and yet all could not go, for Sam was lame. Harold offered to go alone; but the others, burning with the hope that their father might yet be on the island, or within sight, insisted on bearing him company. Sam also helped to settle the question, by saying:

"Go, Mas Robbut, and little Missus, and Mas Frank; go all o' you. Don't be 'fraid for me; s'pose Injin come, he nebber trouble nigger."

This remark was based upon the well known fact that Indians seldom interfere with negroes. And encouraged thus to leave him a second time alone, the young people resolved to go in a body to the coast; agreeing with him, however,

that if he saw any danger he should give them timely warning by setting on fire a fallen pine-top.

Carrying what arms they could, and sending their dogs on either side as scouts, they walked swiftly along their well known path to the seacoast. No accident happened, no sign of danger appeared; everything was as usual on the way, and at the place of their old encampment. But scarcely had they reached the oak, before Harold, pointing to the earth, softened by a rain two nights before, cried out:

"Look here, Robert! The tracks of two persons wearing shoes!"

Robert's unpractised eye would never have detected the signs which Harold's Indian tuition enabled him so readily to discover; he could scarcely distinguish, after the closest scrutiny, more than the deep indentation of a boot-heel. But that was enough; a boot-heel proved the presence of a boot, and a boot proved the presence of a white man. That one fact relieved them from all apprehension that the visitors were Indians.

They fired their guns, to attract if possible the attention of the strangers; giving volley after volley, in repeated succession, and scanning the coast in every direction; but it was without the desired result--the persons were gone. Their dogs had by this time gone to a spot near the bluff, where there had been a fire, and were engaged in eating what the boys discovered, on inspection, to be a ham-bone and scattered crumbs of bread. On descending the bluff, where footprints were sharply defined in the yielding sand, Frank exclaimed:

"Here is *William's* track! I know it--I know it is William's!"

The others examined it, and asked how he knew it was William's.

"I know it," said he, "by that W. When father gave him that pair of thick boots for bad weather, William drove a great many tacks into the sole; and when I asked him why he did so, he said it was to make them last longer, and also to know them again if they should be stolen, for there was his name. In the middle of one sole he drove nine tacks, making that W., and in the other he drove seven, so as to make an H.; for he said his name was William Harper. Yes, look here," pointing to the other track, "here is the H., too."

There was now not the shadow of a doubt that the track thus ingeniously identified was William's. Then whose was that other, formed by a light, well shaped boot? Every heart responded. The elder boys looked on with agitated faces; Mary burst into tears, and Frank, casting himself passionately down, laid his wet cheek upon that loved foot-print, and kissed it.

But he was gone now--though he had been so near--gone without a word, or a sign, to say that he was coming back. Gone? Perhaps not. Perhaps a smoke might recall him, if the guns did not. Harold silently ascended the bluff, and with one of Frank's matches fired the grass placed beneath the heap of wood near the

flag-staff. The smoke rose; it attracted the attention of the others, and soon they heard Harold call from a distance, "Come here, all of you! Here is something more."

They ran together, Robert and Mary taking each a hand of Frank; and when they reached the flag-staff, saw a paper fastened to it by wooden pins driven into the bark, and on the paper, written in large round characters:

"*Five Thousand Dollars Reward*

"Will be cheerfully paid to any one who shall restore to me in safety a boat's company, lost from Tampa Bay on the 26th of October last. They were dragged to sea by a devil-fish, and when last seen were near this island. The company consisted of my nephew, Harold McIntosh, aged nearly fifteen, having black hair and eyes; and my three children, Robert Gordon, aged fourteen; Mary Gordon, aged eleven; and Frank Gordon, aged seven years; all having light hair and blue eyes.

"The above reward will be paid for the aforesaid company, with their boat and boat's furniture; or one thousand dollars for any one of the persons, or for such information as shall enable me to know certainly what has become of them.

"Information may be sent to me at Tampa Bay, care of Major ----, commanding officer; or to Messrs. ---- & Co., Charleston, S. C.; or to R. H----, Esquire, Savannah, Georgia.

"Dec. 9, 1830.

"CHARLES GORDON, M.D."

Underneath was the following postscript in pencil:

"P.S. The aforesaid company have evidently been upon this island within ten days past. I have searched the coast and country here in almost every direction. They appear to have left, and I trust for home. Should any fatality attend their voyage, they will probably be heard of between this island and Tampa Bay. C. G."

The young people were overwhelmed. "Poor father!" Mary said with a choking voice, "how disappointed he will be when he reaches home, and finds that we are not there! And poor mother! if she is there I know it will almost kill her."

"But father *will* come again--he will come right back--I know he will," Frank murmured resolutely through his tears.

"Yes, if mother is not too sick to be left," conjectured Mary.

"Come, children," said Robert, with an air of sullen resolve, "it is of no use to stand here idle. Let us go back to the prairie, and build our boats."

"But not before we have left word on the flag-staff to tell where we are to be found," Harold added. A bitter smile played around the corners of Robert's mouth, as muttering something about "locking the door after the steed is stolen," he took out his pencil, and wrote in deep black letters,

"The lost company, together with Sam, a servant, are to be found at a small prairie three or four miles south-east from this point. We have lost our boat, and are building another.

"Dec. 10, 1830. ROBERT GORDON."

They collected another pile of wood and grass for a fire signal near their flag-staff, and then with slow, sad steps, turned their faces once more to the prairie.

CHAPTER XXX

BEST CURE FOR UNAVAILING SORROW--MARY'S ADVENTURE WITH A BEAR--NOVEL DEFENCE--PROTECTING THE TENT

It was natural that the youthful company should be much cast down by this misfortune. But recent experiences had taught them many valuable lessons, and had caused them to practise, more fully than they would have otherwise, those wise maxims which had formed no small part of their education. While Robert and Mary were yet anguished with their sense of disappointment, Harold cheerfully remarked:

"I have often heard your father say, 'There are two kinds of ill that it is worth no wise man's while to fret about:--Ills that *can be* helped, for then why do we not help them? and, Ills that *cannot be* helped, for then what is the use of fretting?' I have also heard him say that '*the best cure for ills that cannot be helped is to set about doing something useful.*'"

"But what can we do more than we have already tried to do?" asked Robert, in a questioning tone.

"Not much, I confess," was Harold's reply; "yet we can be on the lookout for something. Yes," he continued, pointing, as they walked, to one of the turkey pens which they had not visited for several days, "there is something now. Very likely that trap has caught, and possibly the poor creature that is in it, is now suffering more in body for want of food and water, than we are in mind. Let us go and see."

They turned aside accordingly, and found within the trap a fine young hen in a half-famished condition. She scarcely noticed them until they were within a few paces of her, and then ran with feeble steps around the pen, twitting mournfully, but without strength to fly. Robert proposed to let her go, saying that there would be no use in carrying home a starved bird; but to this Mary objected. She was beginning to believe with Harold that they were destined to stay a long time on the island. "I think," said she, "we had better take her home, and make a coop for her, and let her be the beginning of a stock of poultry. We can get some ducks, too, I have no doubt, and that will be so nice."

The picture which she drew was so comfortable and pleasant, that they agreed to put it into instant execution. They would make for her not a coop merely, but a poultry yard and house, and stock it for her with turkeys, ducks, and brant; and she and Frank should feed them every morning on acorns and chopped venison, and then they would live like princes. The only particular difficulty that suggested itself in the case was, that wild turkeys cannot be tamed. There is such an innate love of freedom in their very blood, that even those which are raised from the egg by tame hens will soon forsake the yard for the forest.

These little pleasant plans (for after all it is *little things* that make life pleasant or unpleasant), occupied their minds, and soon employed their hands; for immediately on their return home they commenced upon Mary's poultry house, and marked out also the limits of the adjoining yard. This occupied them for the two remaining days of that week, and it was not until the Monday following that they commenced working upon their boats.

In the midst of that week, however, another incident occurred, which threatened to be fearful enough in its consequences, and caused another interruption to their work. Robert, Harold, and Sam, were engaged upon the fallen tree; Mary was preparing their dinner, and Frank, having found a large beetle, was employed in driving down sticks into the ground, on the plan of the picket fence, "making," as he professed, "a house for his turkey." He had begun to feel hungry; and as the odour of the broiling venison floated to his olfactories, he suddenly became ravenous. He left his beetle half penned, and was on his way to ask his sister for a mouthful or two before dinner, when directly behind the tent he saw a great black object approaching the spot where Mary stood.

He looked a moment, uncertain what it could be, then gave a scream. "Run, sister! run!" he said. "Come here! Look! look!" She looked, but saw nothing, for the tent intervened. As Frank said "run!" he set the example, and reaching a small tree about six inches in diameter, climbed it as nimbly as a squirrel, crying as he ran, "Come here! Come here!"

Mary was astonished. She was sure from the tones of his voice that he was in earnest, yet she saw no danger, and hesitated what to do. Observing him, however, climb the tree, calling earnestly to her, she was about to follow, when in a moment it was too late. An enormous bear came from behind the tent, snuffing the odour of the meat, and looking very hungry. Almost as soon as it discovered her, it rose upon its hind legs, seeming surprised to meet a human being, and came forward with a heavy growl. Had any one been present to help, Mary would probably have screamed and fainted, but thrown upon her own resources she ran to the fire and seized a burning brand. Then another and very fortunate thought came to her mind. The dipper, or water ladle, was in her hand; and as she drew the brand from the fire, she dipped a ladle full of the boiling, greasy water, and threw it into the breast, and upon the fore-paws of the growling beast.

That expedient saved her life. The bear instantly dropped upon all fours, and began most piteously to whine and lick its scalded paws. Mary seeing the success of her experiment, dipped another ladle full, and threw it in its face. The bear now uttered a perfect yell of pain, and turning upon its hind legs, ran galloping past the tent, as if expecting every moment to feel another supply of the hot stuff upon its back.

All this time Frank was calling from his tree, "Come here, sister! He can't get you here! Come! come!" And Mary was about to go; but the bear was no sooner out of sight, than she felt very sick. Beckoning Frank to come to her, she ran towards the tent, intending to fire off one of the guns, as a signal for the large boys to return; but ere reaching the door her sight failed, her brain reeled, and she fell prostrate upon the earth. Frank looked all round, and seeing that the bear was "clear gone," sprang lightly from the tree, and ran to her assistance. He had once before seen her in a fainting fit, and recollecting that Robert had poured water in her face, and set him to fanning her, and chafing her temples and the palms of her hands, he first poured a dipper full of cold water on her face, then seizing the conch, blew the signal of alarm, till the woods rang again.

This soon brought the others. Harold came rushing into the tent, and by the time that Robert arrived, he had loosened Mary's dress, and was rubbing her hands and wrists, while Frank fanned her, and told the tale of her fighting the bear with hot water. The boys were powerfully excited. Harold's eye turned continually to the woods, and he called Mum, and patted him with one hand, while he helped Mary with the other.

"Let me attend to her now," said Robert. "I see by your eye that you wish to go. But if you will only wait a minute, I think sister will be sufficiently well for me to go with you."

"I am well enough now," she faintly replied. "You need not stay on my account. Do kill him. He can't be far away. Oh, the horrible"--she covered her eyes with both hands, and shuddered.

"But will you not be afraid to have us leave you?" asked Robert.

"No, no; not if you go to kill that terrible creature. Do go, before he gets away."

Sam had in the meantime hobbled in, and the boys needed no other encouragement. Frank showed them the direction taken by the bear, and they set out instantly in pursuit. Mum had already been smelling around, and exhibiting signs of rage. Now he started off on a brisk trot. They followed him to a moist, mossy place, where the bear appeared to have rolled on the damp ground, and drawn the wet moss around it to alleviate the pain of the fire; then to another low place, where he showed by his increasing excitement that the game was near at hand. Indeed, they could hear every minute a half whine, half growl, which proved that the troubled beast was there in great pain, and conscious of their approach. But it did not long remain. Seeming to know that it had brought upon itself a terrible retribution, by attacking the quiet settlement, it broke from the cover, and ran to a large oak, in the edge of the neighbouring hammock, and when the boys arrived, they found it climbing painfully, a few feet above ground. Its huge paws convulsively grasped the trunk, and it made desperate efforts to ascend, as if confident that climbing that tree was its only refuge, and yet finding this to fail it in its time of need. Both boys prepared to shoot, but Harold beckoned to Robert.

"Let me try him in the ear with a rifle ball, while you keep your barrels ready in case he is not killed."

He advanced within ten paces, rested his rifle deliberately against a tree, took aim without the quivering of a muscle. Robert saw him draw a "bead sight" on his victim, and knew that its fate was sealed. There was a flash, a sharp report, and the heavy creature fell to the earth, like a bag of sand, and the dark blood, oozing from ears and nose, proved that its sufferings and its depredations were ended for ever.

"He will give us plenty of fresh pork, the monster!" said Harold, endeavouring to quell his emotions, by taking a utilitarian view of the case, and, in consequence, making a singular medley of remarks, "What claws and teeth! I don't wonder that Mary fainted! She is a brave girl!"

"Yes, indeed," replied Robert; "there is not one girl in a thousand that could have stood her ground so well. And that notion of fighting with hot water--ha! ha! I must ask where she got it. It is capital. Only see here, Harold, how this

fellow's foot is scalded; this is the secret of his climbing so badly."

Mary's hot water had done its work effectually. The bear was terribly scalded on its paws, breast, face, and back of its head. The boys bled it, as they did their other game, by cutting through the jugular vein and carotid artery; but wishing to relieve Mary's mind as soon as possible, they returned to inform her that her enemy was dead.

"And pray tell me, sister," said Robert merrily, after recounting the scene just described, "where did you learn your new art of fighting bears?"

"From cousin Harold," she replied.

"From me, cousin!" Harold repeated. "Why, I never heard of such a thing in my life. How *could* I have told you?"

"You said one day," Mary continued, "that wild beasts are afraid of fire, and that they cannot endure the pain of a burn. Now when I took up the brand to defend myself, according to your rule, I remembered that *hot water* hurts the most, and that moreover I could *throw* it. But if you had not mentioned the one, I should not have thought of the other."

"I think you deserve a patent," said Harold, patting her pale cheek. "You have beat the whole of us, not excepting Robert, who was a perfect hero in his day; for he conquered a panther with duck-shot, but you have conquered a bear with a ladle. Why, cousin Mary, if ever we return to a civilized country we shall have to publish you for a heroine."

She smiled at these compliments, but remarked that she was not heroine enough to covet another such trial; for that she was a coward after all.

"And you, Master Frank," said Robert, whose pleasurable feeling excited a disposition to teaze, "you climbed into a tree."

"Indeed I did," replied Frank, "as fast as I could, and tried to get sister Mary there too. But she would stay and fight the bear with hot water. Sister, why did you not come?"

"I did not know why you called," she answered. "I did not see anything, and did not know which way to run."

"I think, cousin," remarked Harold, "that if you had run when Frank called, you would have saved yourself the battle. The bear was after your meat, not after you; and if you had only been willing to give up that dinner, which you defended so stoutly, he would probably have eaten it, and let you alone."

With this lively chatting, Mary was so much cheered, that she joined them at dinner, and partook slightly of the choice bits that her brother and cousin pressed upon her. The afternoon was spent in preparing the flesh of their game. They treated it in every respect as they would pork, except that the animal was flayed; and they found the flesh well flavoured and pleasant. The parings and other fatty parts were by request turned over to Sam, who prepared from them a soft and

useful grease. The skin was stretched in the sun to dry, after which it was soaked in water, cleansed of all impurities, and rubbed well with salt and saltpetre (William had put up a quantity), and finally with the bear's own grease. After it had been nicely cured, Harold made a present of it to Mary, who used it as a mattress so long as she lived upon the island.

Warned so impressively to protect their habitation against wild beasts, the boys spent the rest of the week in erecting a suitable enclosure. They planted a double row of stakes around the tent and kitchen, filling up the interstices with twigs and short poles. The fence was higher than their heads, and there was a rustic gateway so contrived that at a little distance it looked like part of the fence itself.

CHAPTER XXXI

HARD WORK--LABOUR-SAVING DEVICE--DISCOVERY AS TO THE TIME OF THE YEAR--SCHEMES FOR AMUSEMENT--TIDES ON THE FLORIDA COAST

For a fortnight the boys worked very hard, and yet made but little apparent progress. Previous to this, they had devoted two days to Mary's convenience, and three more to her protection. The rest had been spent in hacking, with dull axes, upon an immense tree. The log was three feet in diameter, and had been rough shaped into the general form of a boat, eighteen feet long. But having no adze, nor mattock, which might be used in digging, and receiving from Sam very little assistance more than the benefit of his advice, they began to feel somewhat discouraged at the small results of their unpractised labours. This caused them to cast in their minds for some device by which their work might be facilitated, and thankful enough were they to Indian ingenuity for suggesting the plan by fire. They set small logs of pine along the intended excavation, and guarding the edges with clay, to prevent the fire from extending beyond the prescribed limits, had the satisfaction to see, the next morning, that the work accomplished by this new agent during the night, was quite as great as that accomplished by themselves during the day.

For a few days they had been working under the pleasing stimulation produced by this discovery, when Robert, pausing in the midst of his work, said,

"Harold, have you any idea what day of the month this is?"

"No," replied Harold, "I know that it is Friday, and that we are somewhere past the middle of December. But why do you ask?"

"Because, if I am not mistaken, tomorrow is Christmas day. This is the twenty-fourth of December."

The announcement made Sam start. He looked at Robert with a half bewildered, half joyful gaze. The very name of Christmas brought the fire to his eye.

"Ki, Mas Robbut," said he, "you tink I remember Christmas? Who ebber hear o' nigger forget Christmas befo'? But for sure, I nebber say Christmas to myself once, since I been come to dis island. Eh! eh! I wonder if ee ent[#] 'cause dis Injin country, whey dey nebber hab no Christmas at all? Eh! Christmas? Tomorrow Christmas?"

[#] If it is not.

Robert could have predicted the effect which his discovery would have upon Sam, but he was excessively amused to observe how unforgiving he seemed to be to himself for neglecting this part of a negro's privilege. As soon as it was settled, by a brief calculation, that the next day was indeed the twenty-fifth of December, another thing was settled, of course--that no work should be done, and that the day should be spent in enjoyment. Sam clapped his hands, and would have been guilty of some antic on the occasion, if his lame leg had not admonished him to be careful. So he only tossed his cap into the air, and shouted,

"Merry Christmas to ebbery body here, at Bellevue and at home!"

"Now comes another question," said Robert; "how shall the day be spent? We have no neighbours to visit. No Christmas trees grow here, and Frank may hang up his moccasins in vain, for I doubt whether Santa Claus ever heard of this island."

"O, yes, Mas Robbut," Sam merrily interposed. "Dere is one neighbour I been want to see for long time. I hear say I got a countryman[#] libbin way yonder in a hollow tree. He is a black nigger, 'sept he is got four legs and a mighty ugly face."

[#] Pronounced long, country ma-an. It usually means a native African.

"What does the fellow mean?" said Harold, seriously.

"O," replied Robert, laughing, "it is only his way of asking us to visit our friend the bear. What do you think of it?"

"We have *promised* to make Mrs. Bruin a visit," said Harold, entering into the joke; "and perhaps she may think it hard if we do not keep our word." Just then the conch called them home. "But let us hear what Mary and Frank have to say. I foresee difficulties all around."

When the question was discussed in general conclave, Mary looked rather sober. She had not yet recovered wholly from her former fright; but not willing to interfere with a frolic, from which the others seemed to anticipate so much pleasure, although it seemed to her to be one of needless peril, she replied that she would consent on two conditions--one was that they should go on the raft, to save the immense walk to the spot, and the other was that they should either put her and Frank in some place of safety while they fought the bear, or supply her with an abundance of hot water.

"That idea of the raft is capital," said Robert. "The tide will suit exactly for floating down in the morning and back in the afternoon. I think we can give sister all she asks, and the hot water too, if she insists upon it."

A word here about tides on the western coast of Florida. From Cape Romano, or Punta Largo, northward to Tampa, and beyond, there is but one tide in the course of the day, and that with a rise usually of not more than three feet. But south of Cape Romano, and particularly in the neighbourhood of Chatham Bay, there are two, as in other parts of the world, except that they are of unequal lengths, one occupying six, and the other eighteen hours, with its flood and ebb. People there call them "the tide and half tide." The plan of the boys was to float down on the nine hour ebb, and to return on the three hour flood.

Sam's notions about the observation of Christmas eve, as a part of Christmas, suited exactly the inclination of the boys; their hands were blistered, and they were glad of a good excuse for leaving off work, by an hour or two of the sun. In anticipation of the next day's absence, and of the Sabbath succeeding, Frank gathered during the afternoon plenty of acorns for the poultry, and grass for the deer and goats, which were to be kept in their fold; and the others laid up a supply of wood for the fire. Mary sliced some nice pieces of venison and bear's meat, and made some bread and Christmas cakes; all, which she packed away in a basket, with oranges, limes, and a bottle of transparent honey. Long before dark

everything was ready for the expedition.

CHAPTER XXXII

CHRISTMAS MORNING--VOYAGE--VALUABLE DISCOVERY--HOSTILE INVASION--ROBBERY--MASTERLY RETREAT--BATTLE AT LAST--A QUARREL REQUIRES TWO QUARRELLERS--THE GHOST'S VISIT

There may have been many a more noisy Christmas, but never a brighter one, and few merrier, than that which dawned upon our young marooners; nor was it entirely without its noise. The boys had requested Sam, in case he was first awake, to rouse them at the break of day, and he had promised to do so. A secret whispering had been observed between him and Frank; and the latter had also begged for a piece of twine, which he promised to return, but the use of which he refused to tell. Conjecturing that it was intended for some piece of harmless fun, they gave it to him, and waited his own time to reveal the purpose.

On going to bed Mary noticed that Frank fidgetted a great deal with his toes, and seemed to be much tickled with several remarks made by himself, but which seemed to her to have nothing in them particularly witty. He was evidently in a frolic, and wanted excuses to laugh. In the dead of night, as Mary supposed, though it was really just before day, she was awakened by feeling him move restlessly, and then put his hands to his feet with the inquiry:

"What is the matter with my toe?"

"Is there anything the matter with it!" she drowsily asked.

"O, no, nothing at all," he replied. "I dreamed that a rat was gnawing it off. But it is only a string I tied there myself."

He then turned over, and lay still, pretending to be asleep; but when he heard her breathe hard, he slipped out of bed, put on his clothes, and went softly out of the tent. Sam had agreed to wake him, so that they two might, according to Christmas custom, "catch" the others, by hailing them first; and as Sam could not go into the room where Mary slept, he persuaded Frank to tie a string to one of his toes, and to pass the other end outside of the tent. It was Sam's pulling at this string that gave Frank his dream, and finally waked him. For a minute or two they whispered together in merry mood, and on Sam's saying, "Now, Mas Frank,

now!" the roar of two guns, and then the sound of a conch, broke upon the ears of the startled sleepers.

"Good morning, lazy folks!" said Frank, bursting into the tent. "Merry Christmas to you all!"

"Merry Christmas, Mas Robbut!" Sam echoed from behind, "Merry Christmas, Mas Harrol! Merry Christmas, little Missus!"

"Fairly caught!" answered Robert; "and now, I suppose, we must look out some presents for you both."

The company completed their toilet, and came together under the awning, which was still their kitchen. The day star was "flaming" gloriously, and the approach of day was marked by a hazy belt of light above the eastern horizon. They kindled their fire, and prepared for breakfast, with many jests and kind expressions; then sobering themselves to a becoming gravity, they sat around the red blaze, and engaged in their usual morning worship.

While the sun threw his first slanting beams across the island, Harold went to the landing, and returned, saying, "Come all. The tide has been going down for hours, and is now running like a mill-tail!"

Hastening their preparations, they were in a short time seated upon the raft, Sam at the helm, and Robert and Harold by turn at the oars. Borne by the current, and impelled by their own efforts, they were not two hours in reaching the proposed landing place.

[image]

They were not two hours in reaching the proposed landing place

The river was exceedingly crooked, and so densely bordered with mangroves, that from the place they left to that which they sought, it was nowhere possible for them to reach the shore. Once when they approached nearest land, they saw a herd of deer peep inquisitively at them through an opening glade, and turn quietly to feed. The tall heron was a frequent sight, lifting its long blue neck high as their heads, and then flapping its broad wings to escape too near an approach; and the dapper kingfisher turning his big head to look at them; and the "poor jobs," or small white cranes clustering thick upon the dead trees; and the Spanish curlew sticking forward its long curved bill; and the grey curlew with its keen note; and the marsh hens, cackling far and near, to say (such is the report) that the tide is moving; and ducks rising in clouds from different points of the marsh and reaches of the river;--these sights were very frequent, and seen with the bright eyes of young people on a Christmas excursion, imparted a charming

vivacity to the scene.

Passing a creek which drained the marsh to their left, they made a discovery, which proved a valuable one indeed. Harold was looking up the creek with that universal scrutiny that had become in him second nature, when he suddenly dropped his oars, exclaiming, "What is that?"

The raft shot so quickly past that no one but Sam had time to look. He, however, replied instantly, "Starn ob a vessel!"

"Stern of a vessel, did you say?" inquired Robert. "'Bout ship, Sam. Come, Harold, let us pull right for it and see."

They brought the raft into an eddy near shore, and though it required a prodigious pull to propel so clumsy a thing against the tide from the creek, they managed to do so, and discovered not the stern of a vessel only, but the whole of a small brig turned bottom upwards, and lying across the creek jammed in the mud and mangroves.

"Well, that is indeed a Christmas gift worth having," said Robert. "Did I say Santa Claus never heard of this island? I take that back; he has not forgotten us."

"He or some One greater," interposed Mary, with seriousness.

They rowed alongside, and tried to enter; but having no tools for penetrating the vessel's side, nor candles for lighting them after they had entered, they concluded to prosecute their voyage, and to delay their visit to the wreck till Monday.

With this intention they pushed out of the creek, and descended to the proposed landing, where they made fast their raft to a crooked root, and stepped upon a firm beach of mixed mud and sand. The fiddlers (a small variety of crabs that look at a little distance like enormous black spiders) were scampering in every direction, with their mouths covered with foam, and their threatening claws raised in self-defence, until each one dived into its little hole, and peeped slyly at the strange intruders. A wild cat sat upon a neighbouring tree, watching their motions with as much composure as if she were a favourite tabby in her mistress' parlour. Frank was the first to spy and point it out. It was within a good rifle shot.

"Stand still a moment, if you wish to see how far a cat can jump," said Harold.

He rested his rifle upon a small tree, and taking steady aim, sent the ball, from a distance of seventy yards, through both sides of the cat, directly behind the shoulders. She leaped an immense distance, and fell dead. Frank seized it, saying it was *his* cat, and that he intended to take off its skin, and make it into a cap like cousin Harold's.

From the landing they followed the mark left by their hatchet upon the trees in their exploring tour, and it was not long before they recognized from a distance the poplar or tulip tree, in the hollow base of which the bear had made her den.

As yet Mum had given no indications of alarm; but on approaching the tree the boys selected for Mary and Frank a pretty little oak, with horizontal branches,

in full sight of the den; and having prepared them a seat made comfortable with moss, and helped them into it, advanced to the field of battle.

To their disappointment the old bear was gone. The sun shone full into the hole, and revealed the two cubs alone, nicely rolled up in the middle of their bed, and soundly asleep. There was some reason to suppose that the mother would return before they left the neighbourhood, and in this expectation Harold prepared to secure the cubs. He placed Robert and Sam as videttes at a little distance, and also charged Mary and Frank to keep a sharp look out from their elevated position, while Mum and Fidelle were set to beating the surrounding bushes as scouts. But, notwithstanding all his care and skill, he found that the work of capturing the cubs was very difficult. The cavity being too large to allow of reaching them with his arms, and afraid to trust himself inside the hole, lest the old bear should arrive and catch him in the act, he relied upon throwing a slip noose over their heads, or upon their feet; but young as they were he found them astonishingly expert in warding off his traps. The only plan by which he at last succeeded, was with a hooked pole, by which he drew forth first one, and then the other, to the mouth of the den, where, after sundry bites and scratches, he seized their hind legs, passed a cord round their necks, and made it secure by a fast knot. This done, he tied each to a tree, where they growled and whined loudly for help. The hunters were now in a momentary expectation of hearing the bushes burst asunder, and seeing the old bear come roaring upon them; but she was too far distant, and had no suspicion of the savage robbery that was going on at her quiet home.

It was fully an hour before the cubs were taken and secured. By that time Mary and Frank had become so weary of their unnatural roosting, that they begged the others to cease their hunt, and return at once to the raft. But here arose a new and unforeseen difficulty. The distance to the raft was considerable, and the way was so tangled that they had made slow progress when they came; what could they now do, encumbered with two disorderly captives, and in constant danger of attack from the fiercest beast of the forest, "a bear robbed of her whelps"? It was easy enough to decide this question, if they would consent to free the captives and return as they came. But no one, except Mary and Frank, entertained this idea for a moment; they would have been ashamed to give up through fear what they had undertaken through choice.

The plan they at last devised was this--which though appearing to assign the post of danger to the youngest, was in fact the safest they could adopt. Mary and Frank led each a cub, but they were instructed to drop the cord on the first appearance of danger, and run to the safest point. Sam marched in the van, Harold brought up the rear; Mary and Frank were in the centre, and while Robert guarded one flank, the dogs were kept as much as possible on the other. It was with much misgiving that this plan was adopted, for the boys began to feel that they had

engaged in a foolish scrape, involving a needless exposure of the young people, as well as of themselves. But they were now *in for it*, and they had no choice, except to go forward or to give up the project in disgrace. Formed in retreating column as described, and ready for instant battle, they turned their faces to the river, and marched with what haste they could.

They had not gone many steps, however, before Harold suddenly faced about, levelled his piece, and called to them to "look out!" He heard a bush move behind him, and supposed, of course, that it was the bear coming in pursuit, but it proved to be only a bent twig righting itself to its natural position.

Not long after Robert raised a similar alarm on his side, and levelled his gun at some unseen object that was moving rapidly through the bushes. Mary and Frank dropped the cords, and Frank clambered up a small tree near at hand. Mary turned very pale, and ran first to Sam, but hearing the noise approach that way, she ran back to Harold for protection. The next moment she saw Sam drop his gun from its aim, and call out,

"You Mum! Come in, sah! You git yo' libber shot out o' you, you scary warment!"

The alarm was occasioned by Mum, who, unperceived by any, had wandered to the wrong side.

The cubs, trained by this time to obey the cord, and either weary with the walk, or submissive to a fate that seemed so gentle, had not stirred from the spot where they were left. Frank slipped quietly from his tree, hoping that nobody had seen him; but Robert caught his eye, and gave a sly wink, to which Frank doggedly replied,

"I don't care, sir. I suspect you would like to have been up a tree too, if you could have got there."

"That I should, Frank," said Robert; "but it seems that you are the only one of the crowd who can find trees in time when bears are about."

They resumed their march to the landing, and were interrupted only once more. The bushes before them rustled loudly, Fidelle rushed forward in pursuit, and the ground shook with the heavy trampling of some large beast. It was on Sam's side; but as he brought his piece to a level, Harold cried, "Deer! deer! don't shoot!" and again all was quiet.

A short walk brought them to the landing; where they wiped their moist brows, and rested, thankful that they had completed their perilous journey without accident. But their dangers were by no means over. The tide was down; the raft was aground; it was not possible to leave for hours; and in the meantime the enraged beast might follow the trace of her cubs, and perhaps assault them where they were. In view of this contingency they tied the young bears at a distance from the shore, but within sight of their own place of repose, confident that if the

mother came she would bestow her first care in breaking their bonds, and taking them away, in which case they could attack and destroy her.

With this expectation they sat down to their Christmas dinner, for which they had by this time a pretty keen appetite. Sam stood sentry while they ate; then Robert and Harold by turns took his post, and gave him opportunity to dine. The spice of danger gave great zest to the enjoyment of all except Mary, who would vastly have preferred being at their comparatively secure and quiet home upon the prairie.

The tide finally rose, and floated the raft. They once more embarked. The young bears were secured, so that they could neither escape nor annoy. The fastening was cast off. Harold's oar, which he used as a pole for shoving off, sunk in the yielding sand, and Robert's "Heigh ho for home!" was hardly uttered, when they heard a tramping on the bluff, and a moment after saw the bear standing on the spot they had left. She stared in surprise at the retreating raft, whined affectionately to her cubs, who whined in answer, and tried to break loose; then seeing their efforts to be ineffectual, and the raft to be moving away, she raised such a roar as made every heart tremble, and with a fierce look at the persons on board plunged into the water. The raft was by this time but ten yards from shore, and slowly "backing" into the stream. Harold's rifle was quickly at his shoulder, and in a second more the blood spouted from the mouth and nose of the terrible beast. But the wound was not mortal, piercing below the eyes, and entering the nostrils and throat; and blowing out the blood by successive snorts, she plunged on, and began to swim.

"Now, Robert!" shouted Harold, "be steady! Aim between her eyes!"

Robert fired first one barrel, and then the other; the bear sunk for a moment, borne down by the heavy shot, but she rose again, streaming with gore, and roaring till the waters trembled. Sam's gun was the only remaining chance, and he used it most judiciously. Waiting until the bear was almost ready to place her feet upon the raft, he coolly levelled his gun, and putting the muzzle within a few inches of her ear, poured its contents bodily into her brain. The furious creature had just time to grasp the side of the raft; she gave one convulsive shake, and turned on her side, stone dead.

"It was a desperate fight," said Robert, drawing a long breath.

"And a very foolish one," rejoined Harold. "I have been thinking for the last hour that we might have been better employed."

Robert looked displeased. "Answer for yourself. If it is foolish, you helped to bring it on."

"I know that," replied Harold, with mildness, "and that makes me condemn it the more."

"Then please, sir, not to blame the rest," said Robert, "for I am sure everybody

behaved as bravely as people could."

"I have not questioned any one's courage, nor have I quarrelled with any one except myself," replied Harold.

"Yes, sir, you have," persisted Robert, "you called us all a parcel of fools for coming on a Christmas excursion."

"O! no, brother," mediated Mary, "he only said we might have been better employed; and I think father would say so too. I am sure if I had known all before coming, as I know it now, I should not have given my consent."

"Please, mossa," said Sam, looking from one to the other, "'tain't any o' you been de fool. Nobody fool but me. Enty I ax you,[#] please come see my countryman in de hollow tree; and you come? And now, please, mossa, don't let my countryman git away. See he floatin' away to de alligator. Please let me catch 'em. I want him fat to fry my hominy."

[#] Did not I ask you.

Sam looked so whimsical throughout the whole of this eloquent appeal, that Robert's face relaxed from its stern and angry expression, and at the last words he caught Harold's eye, and burst into a laugh.

"Come, Harold," said he, "let us save his fat; I know his mouth waters for it."

The quarrel was over. Indeed it could not properly be called a quarrel, for it was all on one side, and no one can quarrel alone. They caught the floating carcass, tied it behind the raft, then pulling into the current, floated rapidly home, and reached the prairie about the middle of the afternoon.

For the rest of the day their hands were full; and it was not until late at night that they were able to retire. The young bears were first stowed away in the same pen with the goats and deer, but Harold was scarcely able to remove them in time to save their lives; for Nanny, after running from them as far as the limits of the pen allowed, rose upon her hind legs with a desperate baa! and bringing her stony forehead against the head of the nearest, laid it senseless on the ground, and was preparing to serve the other in the same way.

What to do with them Harold did not know. He dared not put them in the poultry house, and he was unwilling either to shelter them in the tent or to tie them outside the palisade. So, until some other arrangement could be devised, he fastened them to a stake inside the enclosure round the tent, where he supplied them with water, honey, and a piece of venison.

The adventure, however, was not quite over. Late in the night Sam was awaked by feeling something move upon his bed, and put its cold nose upon his

face. Thinking it was some one walking in his sleep, he called out, "Who dah?" and putting out his hand, felt to his dismay the rough head and shaggy skin of a bear. Sam was a firm believer in ghosts, both human and brute. He gave one groan, and cried out, "O massy!" expecting the next moment to be overpowered, if not torn to pieces; then jumping from bed in the greatest hurry, he hunted tremulously for some weapon of defence, exclaiming all the while,

"Mas Harrol! Mas Robbut! O massy! Here de ole bear, or else he ghost, come after us."

The taper was brought from Mary's room, and disclosed the secret. One of the cubs feeling in the chill, night air the want of its mother's warmth, had loosed the insecure fastening, and come to seek more comfortable quarters in the tent. "It is your countryman's baby, Sam," said Robert, after the excitement had subsided. "You killed its mother, and it has come, poor little orphan, to ask that you shall be its daddy now."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CUBS--VOYAGE TO THE WRECK--STORES--HORRID SIGHTS--TRYING PREDICAMENT--PRIZES--RETURN--FRANK NEEDS ANOTHER LECTURE

Early on Monday morning Robert and Harold set out for the wreck, leaving Sam to guard the young people, and to add another apartment to the fold, for the accommodation of the cubs. It may be stated here, that the new pets had eaten little or nothing since they were taken. For several days Sam was compelled to force the food and water into their mouths; but after they had acquired the art of feeding in a domestic way, Frank assumed their whole care, and was indefatigable in attending to their wants and their education. He taught them to stand on their hind feet and beg; to make a bow by scraping their feet, like country clowns; and many a wrestling match did he have with them, in which for a long time he was invariably the victor. Robert named them, after the twins of old, Castor and Pollux.

By Sam's advice, the boys took with them on their voyage an ax, hatchet, auger, and saw, together with some candles and a rope, and reached the wreck about nine o'clock. They moored their raft fast to a projecting bolt, and then,

with much difficulty, succeeded in reaching the stern windows, from which the receding tide flowed gently, bearing on its bosom an unpleasant odour, like that of animal matter long decayed. They peeped into the dark cavity, and receiving a full blast of its sepulchral odours, drew back in disgust.

"I cannot go into *that* hole," said Harold, "it is stifling. Let us cut a passage through the side or bottom."

Clambering along the sloping side next the rudder, they selected a place for their scuttle, and commenced to work, but the thick and well fastened copper was so difficult to remove, that their hatchet was nearly ruined before they reached the wood. Then, with their auger, they made an entrance for the saw, and soon opened a hole between two of the ribs, large enough to admit their bodies.

Harold descended first, and standing upon a hogshead, which, being on the top of a confused pile, reached near the hole, lit a candle, and helped Robert to descend.

They were in the hold where all the grosser articles were stowed. Some of the hogsheads visible appeared to contain sugar, others molasses, rum, &c. Passing towards the stern, they saw half a dozen boxes and crates, of different sizes, one of which was filled with lemons, and from the other, on being broken, rolled out a cocoanut. Returning from this hasty survey towards the forward part of the hold, they discovered a plentiful supply of flour, ship-bread, rice, hams, and beef, stowed away in the style appropriate to each. The vessel was evidently victualled for a long voyage.

Satisfied with this partial examination, they returned amidships, and sought the hatchway, through which they might descend into the habitable part of the vessel. It was choked by such a multitude of boxes and bags, that they were a long time in finding it, and longer still in freeing it from encumbrances. Descending by their rope, they found themselves on the inner side of the inverted deck. The water had by this time all run off, except a puddle in one corner; and the floor, or rather that which had been ceiling, was wet and slimy, with deposits from the muddy river water.

On entering the cabin the sight which greeted them was horrid. There lay four skeletons, of a man and woman, a boy and girl, handsomely dressed; the soiled though costly garments still adhering to the wet and ghastly bones. The sight was more than Harold could endure; he called to Robert, and hastened as fast as possible to the open air.

"O, horrid! horrid!" said he, pale as a sheet. "I don't think I can ever go back to that dreadful cabin. It made me almost faint."

"It was horrid, indeed," responded Robert. "But you will soon recover; the trouble was more in your mind than in your body. I doubt not you are feeling as father says he felt when going first into a dissecting room--he fainted outright;

and he said that this is no uncommon thing with beginners, but they soon become used to it."

"I am willing enough to go through the whole vessel," said Harold, "but not into that cabin, for a while at least."

"Poor creatures!" sighed Robert, "they appear to have been passengers; and unless the cabin filled soon with water, they must have had a lingering death."

"Don't speak of it," Harold pleaded. "The bare thought makes me shudder. And then to think of their being devoured by such slimy things as eels and catfish, and of being pinched to pieces by crabs, as these bodies were--it is sickening!"

Robert perceived that these reflections were exceedingly painful to his cousin, and had been in fact the cause of his sickness; he therefore managed adroitly to shift the conversation from point to point, until it gradually assumed a cheerful character. Pleasant thoughts were the medicine Harold needed, and in the course of a few minutes he himself proposed to renew the search.

Descending between decks, they found in the side of the vessel, contrary to custom, the cook's room. It contained a stove, with all its appurtenances complete. This was a real treasure; they rejoiced to think how much labour and trouble would be saved to Mary, whose patience and ingenuity were often put to the test for the want of suitable utensils.

The steward's room adjoined; and here they found crockery of all sorts, though most of it was in fragments; knives, forks, spoons, and candlesticks, none of which they valued, having plenty of their own; two bottles of olives, and a case of anchovies, sound and good, and a fine set of castors, partly broken, containing mustard, pepper, catsup and vinegar. Upon the topmost shelf (or under what *had been* the lowest) were two large lockers, which they opened with difficulty, the door being fast glued with paste, and out of which poured a deluge of musty flour from an upturned barrel. There were also different kinds of hard biscuit and ship bread, but they were all spoiled.

From these two rooms they passed with great difficulty to the forecastle, having to cut their way through a thick partition. Here the sight was more appalling than that which they had witnessed in the cabin. Lying on the floor, partly immersed in a muddy pool, were the skeletons of eight men and two boys; and in the midst of them they heard such a splashing of the water that their blood ran cold, and their hair stood on end. They started back in terror, thinking at first that the dead had waked from sleep, and were moving before their eyes; in doing so, Robert, who carried the candle, jostled roughly against Harold, and instantly they were in darkness.

"O mercy! mercy!" Robert ejaculated, in an agony of alarm, and falling upon his knees clasped his hands together, expecting every moment to be his last. Harold, however, with that presence of mind which is the mark of true courage,

and is the best preservative in time of danger, threw his arms around him, to prevent him from escaping, and fortunately recovered the candle, which had dropped in the edge of the wet slime upon the floor.

"Nothing but fishes!" said he, divining the state of Robert's mind from what he knew of his own. "Nothing but fishes! I saw one leap from the water. Softly, Robert, let us light the candle."

The quieting effect of a soft, calm voice in a season of excitement is magical. Robert's excessive fear subsided, and though he trembled violently, he aided Harold to re-light the candle. Fortunately the wick was scarcely touched by the water; there was a slight spluttering from a particle or two of damp mud, but the flame soon rose bright as ever. Harold's hand now began to tremble; for though in the moment of trial his nerves had been stretched and steady as a tense wire, the re-action was so great that he began to feel weak. Robert perceived this, and pulling his sleeve said,

"Come, let us go."

Harold's courage, however, was of that sturdy kind that rises with the occasion, and he replied, "No, I mean to go through with it now. I was driven from the cabin by a bad smell, but no one shall say that I was scared off by a few catfish. Look, do you not see them floundering in the water?"

A calm inspection wholly relieved Robert from his fears, and he continued to examine the room with composure, although while looking he beheld the startling sight of a skeleton in actual motion through the water, a large fish having entered its cavity, and become entangled in the adhering clothes, giving a most lifelike motion to the arms and legs.

A glance around this room was sufficient to convince them that the vessel was of a warlike character. Great numbers of guns, pistols, cutlasses, and pikes, were visible on the floor, where they had fallen into the water, or against the walls where they had been fastened. The boys surveyed these significant appendages, exchanged glances with each other, and simultaneously exclaimed, "A cutter, or a pirate!"

"I doubt whether it can be a cutter," said Robert; "my mind misgives me that it is a vessel of bad character. But we can tell by going to the captain's room. Let us see."

They returned to the cabin, and entering the room which appeared to be the captain's, found it abundantly supplied with arms of various sorts, and (though mostly injured by the sea-water) of exquisite finish. Of papers they saw none; these were probably contained in a heavy iron chest which was fast locked, and the key of which was nowhere to be found. In the mate's room, however, the evidences were more decisive. There were flags of all nations; and among them one whose hue was jet black, except in the middle, where were sewed the snow-

white figures of a skull and cross-bones. From the side-pocket of a coat, which lay in the berth, they took a pocket-book, containing letters in Spanish, and a paper signed by forty-two names, the greater part of which were marked by a cross. These indications were satisfactory, and the boys afterwards ascertained by circumstantial evidence, which left them no shadow of a doubt, that not only was the vessel piratical, but that she was overwhelmed by the same storm that had so nearly proved fatal to Sam. The prize, therefore, they considered their own by right of first discovery--stores, arms, magazine, money and all.

"By rights there ought to be a carpenter's room somewhere," said Robert; "or if not a room, there must be tools, which will help us greatly in our work. Let us look for them."

To Harold's mind the tools were the most valuable part of the prize, unless indeed they could find a boat ready made. But before proceeding, they took each a pistol from the captain's room, loaded, and thrust it into their bosoms, supposing that they should be more calm and self-possessed, when conscious of having about them the means of defence. The carpenter's room was found, and in it a chest of splendid tools, and an excellent grindstone.

With these discoveries the boys were content to think of returning home; and now they began to feel hungry. Taking from the steward's room the bottle of olives and case of anchovies, and breaking open a barrel of shipbread, from which they filled their pockets, they went to the open air, taking each a lemon and cocoanut, in lieu of water and dessert.

It was time to load the raft. Taking some small bags, of which they found a number, they filled them with sugar, coffee, rice, and flour; they brought out six hams, and, by opening a barrel, six pieces of mess-beef. In searching still further, they lit upon a barrel of mackerel, a firkin of good butter, and a case of English cheese; of each of which they took a portion, and laid all upon the most level part of the vessel's bottom, ready for lowering into the raft. The kegs of biscuit they found on trial to be too large to pass through their scuttle; they emptied them by parcels into a large bag outside.

Hitherto they had said nothing and thought little about money; for their minds had been fixed on supplying themselves with necessaries and comforts, together with the means of returning home. Indeed, the idea of enriching themselves at the expense of the dead, even if they were pirates, savoured rather of robbery, and the delicate sense of the young explorers was offended by the thought.

"But let us at least gather whatever of this sort we may find," said Harold, after exchanging thoughts with his cousin. "We can afterwards ask your father to decide what use shall be made of it."

Neither their consciences nor their pockets, however, were very heavily burdened with this new charge; for they found only a few hundred dollars' worth

of money, chiefly in foreign gold, together with several rich jewels, the greater part of which was discovered in consequence of an act of kindness to Mary and Frank.

Resolving to return the next day, accompanied by the whole party, and unwilling to have Mary's nerves shocked as theirs had been, they determined to remove all unsightly objects from the cabin, and to close them up in the forecastle. A box of sperm candles enabled them to set a light along the dark passages, and in each room; and taking a small sail, upon which they carefully drew the skeletons, they carried them to the forecastle, and laid them decently in one corner. From the person of the man they took a gold watch and chain, a handsome pencil case, and pocket-knife, a purse containing several pieces of gold, and a pocket-book, containing papers, written apparently in Spanish, but almost perfectly illegible. The name of this man, marked upon the clothing, and occasionally appearing in the papers, was Manuel De Rosa. Upon the person of the lady were found a diamond ring, hanging loosely upon the slender bone of one finger, and on the lace cape over her bosom a sprig breast-pin, whose leaves were emerald, and its flower of opal. Her name, and that of the children also, was De Rosa. These valuables were collected into a parcel, together with a lock of hair from each, as the means of identifying them, should any clue be obtained to their history and their home.

While removing a coarsely clothed skeleton from that corner of the forecastle in which they wished to deposit the bones of the perished family, they found it so much heavier than the others, as to induce a closer examination. They found hid beneath the clothing, and belted to the bones, a large girdle, containing fifty-four Mexican dollars, a variety of gold pieces from different nations, and a lump of what appeared to be gold and silver fused into one mass. The name of this man could not be ascertained.

Their next work was to fumigate the cabin. They wrapped a little sugar in a piece of brown paper, and setting it on fire, walked around the room, waving it in every direction. The aromatic odour of the burnt sugar pervaded every crack and cranny, and overwhelmed so entirely the disgusting effluvium, that Robert snuffed at the pleasant fragrance, and remarked, "There, now! the cabin is fit for the nose of a king. Let us close up the forecastle, and return home."

Beside the provisions, which have been already mentioned as constituting a part of the intended load for the raft, the boys carried out such tools as they conceived needful for their work, consisting of adzes, drawing-knives, augers, gimlets, chisels, planes, saws, square and compass, and an oil-stone. They also took the box of sperm candles and a box of soap; three cutlasses and a rapier, four pikes, four pair of pistols, three rifles, two muskets, and flasks and pouches to suit. Gunpowder they did not see, except what was in the flasks; they knew there must be plenty in the magazine, which they supposed to be near the officers' rooms,

but which they did not care then to visit.

A short but laborious tug against the tide, that set strongly up the creek, brought them to the river, on which they floated gently home. When within half a mile of the landing, they fired a gun, as a signal of their approach; and long before they reached the shore, Mary and Frank were seen running to meet them, with Mum and Fidelle scampering before, and Sam hobbling far in the rear.

"Here, Frank, is your Christmas present," said Robert, when the raft touched land; "and here, Sam, is yours, at least so long as we stay upon the island."

He tossed the one a cocoanut, and handed the other a musket and cutlass. Harold's presents were still more acceptable; he gave Frank a nice pocket-knife, somewhat the worse for rust, and gave Sam a large twist of tobacco.

Frank's eyes twinkled with pleasure at the sight of the knife; but Sam's expression of countenance was really ludicrous. He was a great chewer and smoker of tobacco, and the sight of that big black twist, after so long a privation, brought the tears to his eyes. He scraped his foot, and tried to laugh.

"Tankee, Mas Robbut! Tousand tankee to you, Mas Harrol! Sword, gun, tobacky! I-ee! I feel like I kin fight all de bear and panter in de wull!"

As the work of unloading and transporting to the tent occupied only about two hours, they had time sufficient, before dark, to construct another and a larger raft. There was a poplar, fallen and dry, near the water's edge; this they cut into suitable lengths, and across the long logs they laid a floor of short ones, so that they doubted not being able at their next load to bring from the wreck all that they wished.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SECOND VOYAGE TO THE WRECK--FUMIGATING AGAIN--MORE MINUTE EXAMINATION--RETURN--ACCIDENT--DANGERS OF HELPING A DROWNING PERSON--RECOVERING A PERSON APPARENTLY DROWNED

Next morning our young marooners endeavoured to make as early a start as on the day before; but there being now more persons to go, each of whom had some preparation to make; and besides that, encumbered by another clumsy float of logs, their arrival at the wreck was fully an hour later. Securing the two rafts to

the vessel's side, Robert and Harold clambered to the hole they had cut, by the help of a rope tied there for the purpose; then making a slipknot at the end, they drew up Sam, Frank, and finally, Mary. The new comers were so anxious to enter the vessel that they could scarcely wait for the lighting of a candle, but slid at once into the hold, and began rummaging by means of the imperfect light transmitted through the scuttle.

The examination of the hold on the day before had been so thorough, that few more discoveries of importance remained to be made; and the new comers, burning with curiosity, begged to be conducted to the rooms below. Entering the cabin, Mary and Frank were repelled by the unpleasant odour that, notwithstanding the former fumigation, still continued; but the smell was on this occasion mingled more with that of mud, and Robert managed by a quick allusion to the river slime, and the nauseous odour of the mangroves, to prevent Mary's suspicion of the real cause.

"We burnt some sugar here, on yesterday," said he, "but the tide has been up since, and we shall have to burn more. Or stay--we can try something else. I recollect hearing father say that burning coffee is one of the best fumigators in the world."

He brought some coffee from the hold, and wrapping it in paper, tried to burn it, as he did the sugar; but it was not so easily ignited; and Mary, in her impatience, took some sugar, and setting it on fire while he was experimenting with the damp coffee, so thoroughly impregnated the room with its fragrant fumes, that they were ready to begin their examination.

The first thing they noticed on entering the cabin, was a handsome sofa and set of chairs. Overhead, screwed fast to what had been the floor, was an extension table, capable of seating from four to twelve persons. Mary clapped her hands at this welcome sight, exclaiming:

"O, now we can sit and eat like decent people again!"

To their right was a little room, with its door open. On entering it, they saw a boy's cap and pair of shoes. Frank pounced upon these, and tried them on, with several merry jests, to which the others made no reply, for the larger boys thought immediately of the little skeleton to which these had belonged. A trunk was there too, perched upon the upturned bottom of what had been the lowest berth, containing the usual wardrobe of the boy; and beside it, the trunk and carpet bag of the girl. These last were locked. On forcing them open, Mary found many of the articles in a state of perfect preservation; though the linen and cotton were sadly mildewed, and almost spoiled. She saw at a glance that the silk dresses, and other parts of attire, were nearly all the same size with her own. But though greatly in need of clothing, and fitted almost exactly in what she found, she manifested more sadness than pleasure at the sight; her mind reverted

irresistibly to the former wearer, who was no doubt as fond of life as herself.

"Poor thing!" she said, as tears came into her eyes, after turning over several articles, "and her name was Mary, too. See here, 'Marie De Rosa,' written so neatly on this white handkerchief. What a beautiful name! I wish I knew her."

Fastened to the wall was a neat looking-glass, and beside it a handsome hair-brush, hung by a blue ribbon to a small brass knob; but the water had dissolved the glue, and the rosewood veneering had separated from the brush. On the floor were two ivory combs, and the fragments of pitcher, bason, and tumblers, lying with the towels. In the berths were two hair mattresses, whose ticking was mouldy and mildewed, but they were otherwise good; and in each, with the damp sheets, was a pair of blankets as good as new.

Next to this room was another, whose door was jammed and swollen tight. Forcing it open, they found two trunks and travelling bags, with various articles of male and female attire--a hat and pair of boots, a bonnet and rich shawl, the little boy's boots and best cap, and the girl's parasol and cloak; new evidences these, to the boys, to prove that the four skeletons belonged to one family. There were also several books, but they were in Spanish, and so perfectly soaked and blackened as to be useless, even had they been in their own language. The De Rosas were evidently a family of wealth and education.

The other rooms were furnished with the usual appendages of warlike men, and beside these there was little else to tell who or what they were. Their papers and valuables were probably locked up in the iron chest, or left behind where they had concealed their treasures.

Passing from the cabin, their attention was arrested at the door by a small closet under the companion-way. Harold stood upon a stool and examined it. There were silver cups, of various figures, a basket of champagne wine, and many bottles and decanters, or rather their fragments, which appeared to have held different kinds of liquors.

"Bah!" said Harold, "liquor in the hold--liquor in the rooms--liquor in the closets--there is more liquor than anything else aboard, except guns and pistols."

"They naturally go together," responded Robert. "I suspect the poor fellows needed the liquor to fit them for their wicked works."

From the cabin they went to the carpenter's room. Sam decided in a moment that he must have the grindstone, and the rest of the tools--they were too good to be lost. He also looked wistfully at the work-bench, with the iron vice attached, and said he thought they could force it from the wall, and float it behind the rafts. But the boys mistrusted his partiality for tools, and decided that it was not so important as some other things.

Next to the carpenter's room was another, into which they forced an entrance with the ax. This was the gunner's. Here they found cartridges in abun-

dance, of all sorts and sizes, bomb-shells, clusters of grape-shot, canisters of balls, a profusion of cannon shot of several sizes, and two small cannons of brass, with balls to suit. There were also several large kegs of powder, but the powder appeared to be spoilt, for the kegs were damp.

When the time came to prepare for loading, the boys united with Sam to enlarge the scuttle. They put upon one raft a keg of rice, and another of flour, the firkin of butter, two cheeses, six loaves of sugar, the grindstone, the chest of tools, Sam's box of tobacco, and more of the hams and beef. On the other, they put the extension-table and leaves, six chairs, the sofa, the trunks of the De Rosas, five mattresses, with their clothing, the looking-glass, &c.

The return voyage was made in all safety until they reached the landing; but there occurred one of those misadventures that appear to come oftenest in seasons of greatest security.

As the rafts neared the shore, Sam hobbled to the hindmost end, to look after his darling tobacco, and having for some reason stooped as one raft struck the other in stopping, he lost his balance, and fell headlong into the water. No one knew of the accident, until hearing a great splutter, they looked around, and saw him blowing the water from his nose and mouth, and wearing a most comical expression of surprise and fear. They ran, of course, to his assistance, but knowing him to be a good swimmer, they apprehended no serious consequences, and were rather disposed to jest than to be alarmed. But Sam, who had been already strangling for a quarter of a minute, so as to be unable to utter a word, and who discerned at a glance that they did not apprehend his situation, stretched out his hand imploringly, and gasped.

"He is drowning!" exclaimed Harold. "Here, Robert, help me!" then ran to obtain something buoyant, to which Sam might cling. When he returned, bringing with him a pair of oars (the nearest thing within reach), he saw his cousin, heedless of danger, and moved only by sympathy, swimming just over the place where Sam had sunk.

"Robert! Robert! COME AWAY!" he called in a voice of thunder; "he is too strong for you, and will drown you!"

Robert turned at this earnest and even imperative call, and began to swim back; but it was too late. Sam rose within reach, grasped his arm, drew him up close, pinioned him firmly, and again sunk out of sight. Mary and Frank shrieked as they saw their brother go down, and Harold stood a moment, with clasped hands, exclaiming, "My God! What shall I do?"

At this moment an idea occurred to him. Calling to Mary, "Bring me that hat" (it was De Rosa's, and water-proof), he threw off his coat and vest, then spreading his handkerchief over the mouth of the hat, so that he could grasp the corners under the crown, he plunged into the water, swimming with one hand,

and holding the hat as a temporary life preserver with the other. As he expected, Robert rose to the surface and grasped him. Harold did nothing at first but hold firmly to the hat to prevent his own sinking, and in that short interval Robert recovered sufficiently to know what he was about.

"Thank God for *you*, Robert!" said Harold. "I was afraid you were gone; here, take the hat and swim to the raft, while I dive after Sam. Has he ceased struggling?" Robert replied, "Yes."

Joining his hands high over his head, Harold rose as far as he could from the water, and sank perpendicularly with his feet close together. He succeeded in finding the body, but not in time to seize it, before he was compelled to rise for the want of breath. He came to the surface, panted for a quarter of a minute, then descended a second time, and rose with the body. Robert reached him one of the oars, dragged him to the raft, and then to the shore.

And now what was to be done? Robert knew well that when a person has been under water four minutes and more it is exceedingly difficult to restore life, and that whosoever would render aid must do it quickly. His preparations were few and simple.

Begging Mary and Frank to make a fire as soon as possible, and to heat one of the blankets, he laid the body with the head lowest, to allow the water to run from the mouth and throat, while he hastily unloosed the clothing. Then laying the body with the head highest, as in sleep, he and Harold rubbed the skin with all their might, for the double purpose of removing the moisture and restoring the heat.

This friction was continued for several minutes, when Robert, requesting Harold to keep on, tried another means. He inserted a reed into one of Sam's nostrils, which he pressed tightly around it, and closing also the other nostril and the mouth to prevent the egress of the air, he blew forcibly until he felt the chest rise, when, by a gentle pressure, he expelled the air as in natural respiration.

By this time Mary and Frank had warmed one of the blankets brought from the vessel. This Robert wrapped closely around the body, and while Mary and Frank were engaged in warming still another, Harold greatly increased the effectiveness of his friction by tearing a third blanket into strips, and using the hot pieces as rubbers.

Persisting for an hour in these simple means, the anxious company were at last rewarded by the signs of returning life. Sam's heart began to beat softly, and shortly after he gave a sigh. The boys were nearly exhausted by their protracted efforts, but still they kept on; and it was well they did, for many a person has been lost by neglect after life seemed to have been restored. When the patient was sufficiently recovered to swallow, Robert poured down his throat some warm water and sugar, remarking it was a pity they had brought none of the wines or

spirits which were so abundant on shipboard.

"There is some in the box of tobacco," observed Frank. "I saw Sam put a bottle there; and when I asked him what it was, he said it was rum to rub on his weak leg."

Robert and Harold exchanged a significant smile; for though Sam might have intended only what he professed, they knew that he loved rum as well as tobacco. It was fortunate, however, that the spirits were there, for it was the best stimulant they could administer. Sam soon opened his eyes, and began to speak. His first words, after looking around, were, "Bless de Lord! Poor Sam here again!"

Leaving him now to recover slowly, the boys brought each a chair from the raft, and sat down to rest.

"Why, Robert," said Harold, "you seem to know by heart the whole rule for restoring a drowned person."

"And why not? There is nothing mysterious in it?"

"So it seems, and I wish you would teach it to me."

"I can do that in half a breath," replied Robert. "In father's words, all that you have to do, is to *restore the warmth and excite the respiration*."

"That, certainly, is simple."

"Father always said," continued Robert, "that he did not see why boys should not all be taught how to help one another on such occasions. 'Send for a doctor,' he said to me, 'but don't wait for him. Go to work at once before life is gone. If you can do nothing else strip off the wet clothes, and rub, rub, RUB, and blow into the lungs. Start the breath, and you will start the blood, or start the blood, and that will start the breath, for each comes with the other. Apply heat inwardly--outwardly by friction, by clothing, by fire, by hot bottles, by sand-bags, by any means, and keep trying for hours.' That is the rule."

"A good one it is," said Harold. "But it is a pity your father did not give you some rule also about keeping out of the way of drowning people so that you might put your knowledge to some use, instead of getting drowned yourself."

"He did," replied Robert, laughing, "but I forgot it. It was exceedingly thoughtless in me to do as I did. However, I tried to make up for it in another way; for after Sam had pinioned my arms, I made no effort whatever, except to take a long breath, and retain my presence of mind. When we were going down, I learned exactly what kind of a grip he had taken, and by the time we reached bottom, I had drawn up my knees, and put my feet against the pit of his stomach. When that was done I felt safe, for I knew that my legs were stronger than his arms, and that I could break his hold. But what did you intend to do when you called me to help you?"

"I had no exact plan," Harold answered, "except to keep you from putting yourself in danger, and then to throw or reach Sam something by which to help

himself. I had seen drowning people before, and knew very well that unless you had something to prevent your own sinking, as I had when you seized me, or unless you were strong enough (as in this case you were not) to hold him at arm's length, he would be almost sure to drown you."

This untoward accident delayed the work of transportation until near dark, and then it was only the lighter and more necessary articles that they carried. Sam gradually recovered, and about dusk, supported by the boys, he staggered slowly to the tent.

CHAPTER XXXV

HOUSEHOLD ARRANGEMENTS--THIRD VISIT TO THE WRECK--RAINY WEATHER--AGREEMENT ABOUT WORK--MARY IN GREAT DANGER--EXTINGUISHING FIRE ON ONE'S DRESS--RELIEF TO A BURN--CONVERSATION

They did not return to the vessel the next day. The work of transporting the many heavy articles brought, and of giving them accommodation, occupied the whole day. Indeed, the work of arranging was by no means easy, for their possessions were now too large for their dwelling. They were therefore compelled to make a new room for Sam and his tools, by means of some spare sails brought from the wreck; and this led them to think of erecting still another wing to the tent, as a place of deposit for their stores of provision.

By Thursday the return tide came at so late an hour in the afternoon, that the boys were loth to go upon the third trip; but there were several other articles of importance that they needed, and intending to make a short visit, they did not start until near mid-day. On entering the vessel their first work was to remove the stove; which being quite new and recently put up, they had no difficulty in taking to pieces, and lowering, with its appurtenances, into the raft. The work-bench they detached, with great labour, from the wall, and tumbled it over the vessel's side. From the carpenter's room they carried several sails, two coils of small rope, and a hank of twine. The magazine they did not care to enter. Most of the powder in the gunner's room was wet, but there were two large kegs of cannon powder, the outside of which was caked and ruined, while the central part was perfectly good, and also a five pound canister of superfine rifle powder,

which was so tightly sealed that not a particle of damp had entered. These they took. And dragging out one of the small cannon they managed, after hard work, to lower it, with its appropriate carriage, into the raft, and deposited along with it several dozen balls, and as many canisters to fit the bore. These, together with the trunks and clothing of the officers, the iron vice, a small kit of mackerel, and the box of cocoanuts, constituted their load. The voyage back was made without accident.

On landing, their first business was to shelter their powder, for the sky was clouding fast, with long blue belts, that promised rain before morning, and the night was rapidly coming on. Unwilling to keep so dangerous a quantity of powder in the tent, they divided it into several parcels, and concealed them in hollow trees, which they closed and marked.

The cannon carriage proved a great convenience in transporting the trunks, the disjointed parts of the stove, and other heavy articles to the tent. But even with this assistance they did not complete their work before the night set in.

The next day was wet--wet--wet. The young people continued within doors, made a particular examination of the trunks, and divided among themselves the articles that were serviceable. With these employments, and the fitting up of their stove, they spent all that day, and part of the next.

It was during that evening, as they sat listening to the incessant patter of the rain upon the canvas roof, that the boys conceived and resolved upon a species of competition, that gave a steady progression to their work from that time forward.

"Tomorrow is New Year's Day," observed Harold. "We have been two months and a half upon the island. Our first boat is not a quarter finished. Why, Robert, it will be six months before we get away by our own exertions; and then your father will have left Bellevue."

"But you forget how many interruptions we have had," replied Robert. "First, there was Sam's misfortune, then yours; after that, our removal to the prairie, and securing the tent; then this discovery of the wreck, which has furnished us with food and tools for continuing our work without interruption. If I am not mistaken, the end of January will see us at Bellevue, or on our way there. What do you think, Sam--can we finish our two boats in a month?"

"May be so, massa, if we work mighty hard; but it will take a heap o' work."

"I doubt if we finish them in two months, work as we may," remarked Harold.

Robert was not pleased with this discouraging assertion, though he was startled to find that the usual prudent Harold entertained such an opinion.

"Now, cousin," said he, "I will put this matter to the test. As we boys used to say, I'll make a bargain with you. We shall all work on the second boat, until it is as far advanced as the present one. Then we shall each take a boat and work. Sam shall divide his time between us. And if at the end of a month we are not ready

to return home, I'll give up that I am mistaken."

"Give me your hand to that bargain," said Harold. "You shall not beat me working, if I can help it; but if, with all our efforts, we leave this island before the last day of February, I will give up that *I* am mistaken."

Faithful to this agreement, the boys went next morning to the landing, and brought the various parts of the work-bench, which they aided Sam in fitting up. The grindstone also they set upon its necessary fixtures; and collecting the various tools that were in need of grinding, they persisted in relieving each other at the crank, until they had sharpened two very dull axes, two adzes, three chisels, a broad ax, and a drawing knife, and stowed them safely under Sam's shelter.

The history of the day, however, was not concluded without an incident of a very serious character, in which Mary was the principal, though unwilling actress; and in which, but for her presence of mind, she would have met with a painful and terrible death.

About ten o'clock that night she retired to her room, undressed, and was laying aside the articles of dress necessary for the next morning, when, turning around, her night clothes touched the flame of the candle, which, for the want of a table, she had set upon the floor. The next instant she extinguished the candle, and was about stepping into bed, when her attention was excited by a dim light shining behind her, and a slight roar, that increased as the flame ran up her back. Giving a scream of terror, she was on the point of rushing into the next room for help, when recollecting the repeated and earnest injunctions of her father, she threw herself flat upon the blanket of the bed, and wrapping it tightly round her, rolled over and over upon the floor, calling for help. The flame was almost instantly quenched, as it probably would have been, even without a blanket, had she only sat down instantly on the floor, and folded the other part of her dress tightly over the flame.[#]

[#] *Flame ascends.* All have observed how much more rapidly it consumes a sheet of paper held with the burning end down, than the same sheet laid on the table. So with a female's dress; an erect posture allows the flame to run almost instantly over the whole person.

But though the *flame* was extinguished, the charred ends of the dress were not; they kept on burning, and coming into contact with the naked skin, made her scream with pain. The agony was so great, that again she was almost tempted to throw off the blanket and rush into the open air, but knowing that this would certainly increase the fire, and perhaps renew the blaze, she drew the blanket more tightly around her, and rolled over, calling to Robert, who had by this time come to

her assistance. "Pour on water--*water*--WATER!" Robert did his best--he fumbled about for the pitcher, then finding it, asked where the water was to be poured; but now that the water was ready to be thrown upon her, Mary felt secure; she cast off the blanket, and the remaining fire was put out by the application of Robert's wet hand.

The time occupied by this terrifying scene was scarcely a minute and a half, yet Mary's night dress was consumed nearly to her shoulders, and her lower limbs were badly scorched. So rapid an agent is fire. Whoever would escape destruction from a burning dress, must work fast, with good judgment and a strong resolution.

Mary's burns were slight in comparison with what they might have been. The skin was reddened for a foot or more along each limb; but it was broken only in two places, about as wide and long as her two fingers. Still the pain was excessive, and she wept and groaned a great deal. Robert applied cold water for a number of minutes, and would have continued it longer, but Mary at last said:

"Bring me a cup full of flour. I have tried it on a burnt finger, and you can scarcely imagine how cooling it is."

The flour was brought, and applied by means of handkerchiefs tied over the raw and blistered parts. Its effect was to form a sort of artificial cuticle over those spots where the skin had been removed; and the soft and cool sensation it produced in the other parts was delightful. Still Mary appeared to suffer so much, that Robert administered an opiate, as he did in the case of Sam, and after that he heard no more from her until next morning.

"What a quick, brave girl she is!" said Harold, after Robert had described the scene. "Most girls would have rushed into the open air, and been burned to death."

"She showed great presence of mind," Robert assented.

"More than that," said Harold, "she showed great *resolution.* I knew a beautiful girl at school, who had presence of mind enough to wrap herself in the hearth rug, but who could not stand the pain of the fire; she threw off the rug, rushed into the open air, screaming for help, and was burnt to death in less than two minutes."

When Mary came from her room next morning her eyes were dull and glassy, from the effects of the medicine, and she had no appetite for more than a cup of coffee. The others met her with more than their usual affection. Her accident had revealed to them how much they loved her; and her coolness in danger, and fortitude in suffering, had given them a greater respect for her character.

"We do sincerely thank God, on your account, cousin," said Harold, as soon as they were left alone that Sabbath morning. "It is so seldom a person meets with such an accident, without being seriously injured."

"I hope I feel thankful, too," returned Mary. "I could not help thinking last

night, before going to sleep, how uncertain life is. O, I do wish I were a Christian, as I believe you to be, cousin."

"Indeed, if I am a Christian at all, I wish you were a far better one," he replied. "I have neither felt nor acted as I desired, or supposed I should."

"But still you feel and act very differently from us."

"My feelings are certainly very different from what they used to be, and I thank God that they are. Yet the only particular thing which I recollect of myself, at the time that I began to feel differently, is that I was troubled on account of my past life, and wished heartily to serve God. To judge from myself, then, I should say that to *desire to serve God*, is to be a Christian."

"O, I do desire," said Mary, weeping. "I do, with all my heart. But I know I am not what I ought to be. I do not love God; I do not trust him; I do not feel troubled for sin, as I ought to be; and I have no reason to think that my sins are forgiven."

"I am a poor preacher, Mary," Harold said, with strong emotion; "for I never knew anything of these feelings myself, until lately. But this I can say, that if you will heartily give yourself to God, to be his servant for ever, and put your trust in his promises, you will be accepted. Did not Jesus Christ come into this world to save sinners, even the chief? Does he not say, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out'? Now what does the Bible mean, but to encourage all who feel as you do?"

Mary did not reply; the tears burst through her fingers, and dropped into her lap. Harold continued,

"Ever since we came to the island I felt as you feel, until the Sabbath when I knelt down in the woods, and gave myself to the Lord. My heart was very heavy; I knew that I was a sinner needing forgiveness, and that I had nothing that I could offer as pay; but I read where God offers salvation 'without money and without price,' and again where he says we must 'believe on him.' Well, after all that, I could not help believing; it was sweet to pray--sweet to think of God--sweet to read the Bible--sweet to do whatever was pleasing to Him. I hope it will be so always; and I long for the time when I can return to Bellevue to talk with your father about these things. Now, cousin, I advise you to try the same plan."

He marked several passages of Scripture for her to read; then walked into the woods, where he prayed that the Lord would direct her, so as to find peace by

believing in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXXVI

SUCCESSFUL WORK--EXCURSION--THE FISH-EAGLE--DIFFERENT METHODS OF PROCURING FIRE--WOODSMAN'S SHELTER AGAINST RAIN AND HAIL--NOVEL REFUGE FROM FALLING TREES

Monday morning found the labourers moving at the dawn of day. Sam was cook, and fulfilled his office with unexpected ability. His corn-bread was delightful; no one but a negro knows how to make it.

The tools were in excellent order, and the boys commenced work in fine spirits. At Harold's suggestion they resolved to work very leisurely that day and the next, as being the surest way to attain expedition in the end. Said he,

"My father was a great manager of horses, and sometimes made tremendous journeys. But his rule was always to begin a long journey very moderately. He used to say, 'If you strain a horse at the first, he will move heavily all the way through, but if you spare him at first, he will become gradually accustomed to the strain, and be able to push on faster at the end than at the beginning of the journey!' Now, as we are the horses, I think we had better make very moderate journeys today and tomorrow."

Robert was much pleased with the rule. Notwithstanding his boast, he had shuddered at the idea of blistered hands and weary limbs; but this plan enabled him to anticipate fresh feelings, and even increasing labour, so long as they chose to work.

In the course of four days the second tree was cut, hewed, and excavated to the exact shape and size of the first. They then drew for choices, and separated, each working on his own boat, within hearing of the other's ax and mallet. One reason, perhaps, of the increased rapidity of their work, was a lesson which they learned of employing every moment to advantage, and of resting themselves by a mere change of work. For instance, when weary of the adze they would resort to the mallet and chisel, the auger, ax, or drawing-knife, and this was to some extent a real rest, for fresh muscles were brought into play while the wearied ones were relieved.

By Friday, however, their whole bodies began to feel the effects of fatigue; and Harold proposed, that for that day their arms should be entirely relieved from labour, and that they should search the woods for timber suitable for masts, yards, and oars. They, therefore, took their guns and hatchets, and went first to the orange landing, where they saw their old raft lying as they had left it exactly a month before. Passing thence to the place which they had dubbed "Duck Point," they proceeded along the beach towards their old encampment, and thence home. This was their route; but it was marked by such a variety of useful expedients, that we must stop to describe them.

While Robert was engaged for a few minutes in searching a little grove, Harold saw a fish eagle plunge into the water, and bring out a trout so large that it could scarcely fly with it to the shore. Harold was hungry; his appetite at breakfast had not allowed him to eat at all. Now it began to crave, and the sight of that rich looking fish whetted it, keenly. He ran towards the eagle, crying out,

"I'll divide with you, old gentleman, if you please; that is too much for one."

The eagle, however, appeared to dissent from the proposal, and tried hard to carry its prey into a tree, but apprehensive of being itself caught before it could rise beyond reach, it dropped the fish, and flying to a neighbouring tree, watched patiently to see what share its human robber was disposed to leave.

A fish is easily enough cooked, if a person has fire; but in this case there was none, and what was worse, no apparent means of producing it, for their matches were left behind, and the wadding of their guns was not of a kind to receive and hold fire from the powder.

"Lend me your watch a minute," said Robert, on learning what was wanted. "It is possible that I may obtain from it what you wish."

Had Robert spoken of some chemical combination for producing fire, by mixing sand and sea-water, Harold could scarcely have been more surprised than by the proposal to obtain fire from his watch. He handed it to his cousin with the simple remark, "Please don't hurt it," and looked on with curiosity. Robert examined the convex surface of the crystal, which being old fashioned, was almost the section of a sphere, and said,

"I think it will do."

Then obtaining some dry, rotten wood from a decayed tree, he filled the hollow part of the crystal with water, and setting it upon a support, for the purpose of keeping the water perfectly steady, showed Harold that the rays of the sun passing through this temporary lens, were concentrated as by a sun-glass. The tinder smoked, and seemed almost ready to ignite, but did not quite--the sun's rays were too much aslant at that hour of the day, and the sky was moreover covered with a thin film of mist.

"It is a failure," said he, "but still there is another plan which I have seen

adopted--a spark of fire *squeezed from the air* by suddenly compressing it in a syringe. If we had a dry reed, the size of this gun barrel, I would try it by using a tight plug of gun wadding as a piston."

But Robert had no opportunity for trying his philosophical experiment, and being mortified by a second disappointment, as he probably would have been, from the rudeness of the contrivance; for Harold's voice was soon heard from the bank above, "I have it now!" and when Robert approached he saw in his hand a white flint arrowhead. With this old Indian relic he showered a plentiful supply of sparks upon the dry touch-wood, until a rising smoke proclaimed that the fire had taken.

During the time occupied by these experiments, and the subsequent cookery, the thin mist in the sky had given place to several dark rolling clouds, which promised ere long to give them a shower. The promise was kept; for the boys had not proceeded half a mile before the rain poured down in torrents. As there was no lightning, they sought the shelter of a mossy tree, and for a season were so well protected that they could not but admire their good fortune. But their admiration did not last long; the rain soaked through the dense masses over head, and fell in heavy drops upon their caps and shoulders.

"This will never do," cried Harold. "Come with me, Robert, and I will provide a shelter that we can trust."

Putting upon their heads a thick covering of moss, which hung like a cape as far down as their elbows, they ran to a fallen pine, and loosened several pieces of its bark, as long and broad as they could detach, then placing them upon their heads above the moss, marched back to the tree, and had the pleasure of seeing the rain drip from their bark shelters as from the eaves of a house. Robert was much pleased with the expedient, and remarked,

"I suppose this is another of old Torgah's notions."

"O, no," replied Harold. "I have frequently seen it used by negroes in the field, and by hunters in the woods. But there is another device of a similar kind, which I will leave you to guess. I was riding once with a rough backwoodsman across one of our Alabama prairies, when we were overtaken by a severe hailstorm, that gave us an unmerciful pelting. Now, how do you suppose he protected himself against the hailstones?"

"Got under his horse," conjectured Robert. "I once saw a person sheltering himself under his wagon."

"He took the *saddle* from his horse, and placed it upon his head. For my own part, I preferred the pelting of the stones to the smell of the saddle."

The rain ceasing shortly after, they continued their walk to the old encampment, which they visited for the purpose of ascertaining whether there were any other signs of visitors. Everything was just as they had left it, except that it had

assumed a desolate and weather-beaten aspect. Their flag was flying, and the paper, though wet, adhering to the staff. At sea the weather looked foul, and the surf was rolling angrily upon the shore. Resting themselves upon the root of the noble old oak, and visiting the spring for a drink of cool water, they once more turned their faces to the prairie.

Whoever will travel extensively through our pine barrens, will see tracts, varying in extent from a quarter of an acre to many hundreds of acres, destroyed by the attacks of a worm. The path from the old encampment led through a "deadening," as it is called, of this sort; in which the trees, having been attacked some years before, were many of them prostrate, and others standing only by sufferance of the winds. By the time our travellers reached the middle of this dangerous tract, a sudden squall came up from sea, and roared through the forest at a terrible rate. They heard it from afar, and saw the distant limbs bending, breaking, and interlocking, while all around them was a wilderness of slender, brittle trunks, from which they had not time to escape. Their situation was appalling. Death seemed almost inevitable. But just as the crash commenced among the pines, a brilliant idea occurred to the mind of Robert.

"Here, Harold!" said he. "Run! run! run!"

Suiting the action to the word, he threw himself flat beside a large sound log that lay *across the course of the wind*, and crouched closely beside its curvature; almost too closely, as he afterwards discovered. Hardly had Harold time to follow his example, before an enormous tree cracked, crashed, and came with a horrible roar, directly over the place where they lay. The log by the side of which they had taken refuge, was buried several inches in the ground; and when Robert tried to move, he found that his coat had been caught by a projecting knot, and partly buried. The tree which fell was broken into four parts; two of them resting with their fractured ends butting each other on the log, while their other ends rested at ten or twelve feet distance upon the earth. For five minutes the winds roared, and the trees crashed around them; and then the squall subsided as quickly as it had arisen.

"That was awful," said Robert, rising and looking at the enormous tree, from whose crushing fall they had been so happily protected.

"It was, indeed," Harold responded; "and we owe our lives, under God, to that happy thought of yours. Where did you obtain it?"

Robert pointed to the other end of the log, and said, "There." A small tree had fallen across it, and was broken, as the larger one had been. "I saw that," said he, "just as the wind began to crash among these pines, and thought that if we laid ourselves where we did, we should be safe from everything, except straggling limbs, or flying splinters."

"Really," said Harold, "at this rate you are likely to beat me in my own

province. I wonder I never thought of this plan before."

"I had an adventure somewhat like this last year, only not a quarter so bad," said Robert. "I was fishing with Frank, on a small stream, when a whirlwind came roaring along, with such force as to break off limbs from several of the trees. Afraid that we, and particularly Frank, who was light, might be taken up and carried away, or else dashed against a tree and seriously hurt, I made him grasp a sapling, by putting around it both arms and legs, while I threw my own arms around him and it together, to hold all tight. I was badly frightened at the noise and near approach of the whirlwind, but for the life of me could not help laughing at an act of Frank's. We had taken only a few small catfish (which he called from their size, *kitten*-fish), and two of these being the first he had ever caught, he of course thought much of them. When the wind came nearest, and I called to him, 'Hold fast, Frank!' I saw him lean his head to one side, looking first at the flying branches, then at the string of fish, which the wind had slightly moved, and deliberately letting go his hold of the tree, he grasped his prize, and held to that with an air and manner, which said as plainly as an act could say, 'If you get them, you must take me too.'"

CHAPTER XXXVII

LAUNCHING THE BOATS--MORE WORK, AND YET MORE--ECLIPSE OF FEB. 12TH, 1831--HEALING BY "FIRST INTENTION"--FRANK'S BIRTHDAY--PREPARING FOR A VOYAGE--RAIN, RAIN

The boats came on swimmingly. By the end of the second week of their systematic labours they had not only been sufficiently excavated, but the young shipwrights had trimmed down much of the exterior. They were two and a half feet wide, by twenty inches deep, and eighteen feet long. At this stage Robert supposed the work to be nearly done, but Sam shook his head, and said, "Not half." The most laborious part of the work was over, but so much more remained, in the way of paring, smoothing, trimming, and bringing into proper shape, that it was full a fortnight before they were considered fit for the water.

They were ready for launching on the same day; and though Robert made his announcement of the fact some hours in the advance of Harold, it was agreed,

that as Sam had been with him half a day more, the race should be considered as even. The launching occupied four days. They were distant from the water respectively an hundred and an hundred and fifty paces. A thick forest was to be traversed. It was necessary to clear a road, build bridges, and cut down the river bank. Robert's was launched on February 1st, and Harold's on February 3d. On each occasion there was a general rejoicing, and every person, not excepting Mary and Frank, fired a salute.

But on being launched the boats did not float to please them. One was too heavy at the bows, the other leaned too much to one side. Several days were spent in correcting these irregularities, and thus closed the fifth week of their labour.

Another week was spent in making the rudders and a pair of oars, and fitting in the seats and masts. This caused them to make another voyage to the wreck, for the purpose of obtaining planks, screws, and other materials. They went, of course, in their boats, and had the pleasure of seeing them behave admirably. They were steady, sat well on the water, and obeyed the oars and helm almost as well as though they had been built in a shipyard.

There were two incidents worthy of note occurring about this time. One was the discovery, made first by Frank, of an interesting astronomical phenomenon. About a quarter before twelve o'clock he had gone to the water bucket beside the door for a drink of water, when all at once Mary heard him call out,

"Run here, sister, run! The sun has turned into a moon!"

He had looked into the water, and seeing the reflected image of the sun like a half moon, sharply horned, had strained his eyes by looking up until he ascertained that the sun itself was of the same shape. Mary, who had witnessed an event of the kind before, perceived at a glance that it was an eclipse. She therefore took a basin, and hurried with Frank to the landing, to inform the others of the fact.

"Look in the *water*, brother," said Frank, whose eyes were yet watery from the severe trial he had given them. "You can't look at the sun without crying."

For a time, of course, no work was done; all were engaged in watching the phenomenon. It was the great annular eclipse of February 12th, 1831, in which the sun appeared at many places like a narrow ring of light around the dark body of the moon. To our young people there was no ring. They were too far south. The sun appeared like the moon when two days old, and the sky and earth were very gloomy.

The other incident was in itself trivial, and would not be introduced here but that the fact it illustrates is sometimes of real importance. It was simply the healing of a wound by what is called "*first intention*." Mary was engaged in some of her culinary duties, when, by an unfortunate slip of her hand, the knife which she was using missed its place, and sliced her finger. The piece was not cut *off*,

but there was a large gash, and it bled profusely. Her first act was to wash the wound well in tepid water until the blood ceased to flow; then seeing that all the clots were removed, she brought the lips of the wound together, and kept them so by a bandage and a little case, like the finger of a glove made fast to the wrist by a piece of tape. The wound soon underwent a process similar to that of trees in grafting, only far more rapid. By the next morning the lips began to adhere, and in the course of three days the wound was healed--so rapidly will the flesh of a healthy person recover from a cut if the conditions necessary to "first intention" are observed, viz., that the parts be *brought quickly together, and kept without disturbance.*

The next week was spent in fitting up the sails and rigging, and preparing the boats, so that in case of rough weather they could be firmly lashed together.

Their work was now done. They had been labouring steadily for a month and a half, and were ready by Friday evening to pack up and start for home. But they resolved to wait and sanctify the Sabbath. They needed rest: they were jaded in every limb and muscle. Moreover, the next day was Frank's birthday. Taking everything into consideration, they preferred to spend that day in rest and rejoicing, partly in honour of Frank, but more especially as a sort of thanksgiving for their successful work. And as the voyage home promised to be long, and perhaps perilous, they also determined that they would devote Monday to trying their boats at sea, by an outward voyage round the island.

After Frank had retired, the rest agreed upon the plans by which to make the following day pleasant and profitable to him.

"I," said Mary, "will make him a birth-day cake."

"And I," said Robert, "will teach him how to shoot a bird."

"And I," said Harold, "will teach him how to swim."

"And I," said Sam, "will sing him a corn song."

They went to bed and slept soundly. It is astonishing how habit can reconcile us to our necessities! Had these young people been set down by any accident, a few months before, in the midst of a lonely prairie, surrounded by a wild forest, full of bears and panthers, afar from their friends, and without any other protection than that which they had long enjoyed, they would have been miserable. But they went to sleep that night, not only free from painful apprehension, but happy--yes, actually *happy*--when they knew that their nearest neighbours were treacherous savages, and that they were surrounded nightly by fierce beasts, from whose devouring jaws they had already escaped more than once, only by the blessing of God upon brave hearts and steady hands. How came this change? It was by cheerful habit. *The labours, dangers, and exposure of men, had given them the hearts of men.* God bless the children! They slept in the midst of that leafy forest as sweetly as though they were at home, and the bright stars that rose by

turns to measure out the night, looked down like so many angel eyes, to watch the place of their habitation.

Mary and Frank were the first to awake in the morning. The others, wearied by their long labours, and free from pressing responsibility, abandoned themselves to a repose as sweet as it was needful. Frank moved first, and his moving awaked Mary, who, on calling to mind the nature of the day, and the resolutions of the night before, put her arms affectionately round his neck, and said, "Good morning, Mr. Eight-years-old; I wish you many pleasant birthdays."

Frank put his arms round her neck, also, and kissed her; then both began to dress. Wishing not to disturb the sleepers, they slipped softly from the tent. Mary went first to the poultry-pen, which she opened. The ducks quacked with pleasure at her approach, and she watched them as they dodged through the narrow hole opened for their passage, and ran in a long line with shaking tails and patting feet after the leading drake. Then she raised the portcullis-like gate for the goats and deer; Nanny bleated, no doubt intending to say "good morning," but the unmannerly kid and fawn pranced away, mindful of nothing but their expected feast of grass and leaves.

While Mary was engaged with these, Frank went to look after his own particular pets. She heard him at the back of Nanny's pen, where the cubs were kept, calling out, "Come along, sir!" then he laughed heartily, but a moment after his voice sounded impatiently, "Quit it, you Pollux! quit it, sir!" then in a distressed tone, "Sister, sister, come help me!" Mary ran to his assistance, yet she could scarce restrain her risibles at the sight which greeted her eyes. Frank had loosed the cord which confined the cubs, and was leading them out for the purpose of a romp, when Pollux, who was a saucy fellow, and knew as well as his young master what was intended, rose, with a playful growl, upon his hind legs, and walking behind him, pinioned his arms close, and began trying to throw him down. Frank was much pleased with what he regarded as a cunning trick in his young scholar; but he soon found that it was by no means pleasant to be hugged in that way by a bear. He tried in vain to break loose, and when Mary came to his assistance, the bear had thrown him down, with his face and nose in the dirt. Frank rose, looking very much mortified, and more than half angry.

"You ugly beast," he said to the bear, that seemed amazingly to enjoy the joke, and was rising for another frolic. "Get out, sir. I have a great mind to give you a beating."

"O, no, Frank," said Mary, "don't be angry with your playmate. Remember who taught him to wrestle, and remember besides that this is your birthday."

Frank's wrath instantly subsided, and jerking down Pollux by the cord, he led both cubs back to the pen, where he secured them, and then washed from his face the traces of his defeat.

Sam had by this time come from his shed-room and made the fire for breakfast, and Robert and Harold, awaked by Frank's call for help, dressed themselves and made their appearance. They all wished Frank a pleasant birthday, and hoped he might have as many as would be for his good.

"Now, Master Frank," said Harold, while they were sitting together, "what would you have us do for you today? We are all your humble servants, and ready to do whatever we can for your pleasure."

"Then," said Frank, "the first thing I want you to do, is to carry me right home to father and mother."

"I wish we could, Buddy," said Robert; "but as we cannot do all that today, you must try to think of something else."

Frank could think of nothing. Robert suggested that he might spend part of his birthday in learning to shoot.

"But I can shoot now," he replied. "Sister and I have shot many times already since we came to the island."

"I mean," said Robert, "that you should learn to use a gun, so as to kill whatever you wish."

"O, yes," said Frank, "I should like that very much. For who knows but some old bear or panther may come after sister or me yet, before we get away."

"O, as for bears," Robert maliciously remarked, "I think you will never need a gun. I think you will always find a tree."

Frank's face reddened as he returned, "I don't care if I did, sir. Cousin Harold knows that I did exactly right. Didn't I, cousin?"

"Pardon me, Frank," Robert implored, "I did not suppose that you felt so sore about that climbing. I only said it to teaze you. I am sure I should have done exactly as you did. But I can't help laughing to think how your feet *twinkled*, as you climbed that tree."

Robert well knew that this half apology would be satisfactory. Frank prided himself on his nimbleness, being so lithe and active that his playmates used to call him "squirrel." The allusion to his "twinkling" feet restored him to good humour.

"Now, Frank," said Robert, beginning his lecture with the gun in hand, "the first lesson I wish to teach you is this, *never let the muzzle of your gun point to yourself, or to any person*, and never allow any person to point one towards you. A gun can never kill where it does not point. Even when you are loading, or walking, be careful to hold it so, that if it should go off it could hurt nothing."

He then related several stories, illustrating the fact that almost all accidents from guns are from careless handling. Frank was a prudent child. He listened attentively, and then replied,

"Brother Robert, I think I had better let the gun alone till I am older. May be, if I begin so early, I shall shoot myself or somebody else."

Robert was pleased with this mark of caution in his little brother, and said, "Hold on to that, Frank, it is a remark worthy of your birthday, and I trust that every return of this day will find you as wise in proportion to your age."

The further instructions intended for Frank that day, being of an out-door character, were interrupted by a rain that commenced about nine o'clock, and held on steadily all day. They employed themselves leisurely in packing and preparing, first for the short voyage contemplated on Monday, and also for the longer voyage home. During the whole day the tent was strewed and confused with the various bags, boxes, trunks, and kegs, intended to receive the articles to be carried. They looked and felt like travellers on the eve of departure. About sunset the rain ceased. The preparations being now complete, they came together in the tent, and rested on the sofa. Sam was missing. He had not been seen for half an hour, and now it was getting dark. Presently they heard a voice ringing musically through the woods, in the direction of the boat landing, "Join, oh, join, oh! Come, boys, we're all here! Join, oh! join, oh!" Frank sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "That is a corn song!"

The music was very simple, and of the kind that may be termed persuasive. It was the song usually sung by the negroes of one plantation, when inviting those of the neighbourhood to join them in their "corn-shuckings." This practice is much more common in the up country of Georgia, where the corn crop is large, than on the seaboard, where the principal attention is given to cotton. A corn-shucking frolic among these light hearted people, is a scene worth witnessing; it is always held at night, and concluded about midnight with a feast, and is to the negro what a quilting party is to country people.

When Frank heard the first stave of Sam's song, he recalled vividly the merry scenes of the corn-shucking, and running towards the landing, met him, and returned, holding him by the hand, and joining in the chorus.

It was late ere they retired to rest. They began to realize a tender nearness to the loved ones at home, such as they had not felt since parting from them. They talked long and gratefully over past deliverances and future hopes; then closed the evening as those should who wish to find the Sabbath a day of blessing.

The next morning dawned more dark and uncomfortable than the day preceding. The whole sky was loaded with clouds, and the rain fell every minute through the day. The young people probably would have found their time pass away very dismally had it not been for the pious vivacity of Harold, who laid himself out to make it agreeable. He frankly avowed that one reason why he wished to have them unite with him in spending the Sabbath aright, was his desire to succeed in the effort to see their friends that week; and he referred for authority, to the story told of Sir Matthew Hale, High Chancellor of England, who advised that, if there were no higher motive, the Sabbath should be kept sacred as a mat-

ter of *policy*; remarking that, for his own part, he could almost foretell his success during the week to come, by the way he spent the Sabbath.

The others, influenced by a variety of considerations, united with him in this effort, and the day passed off not only with pleasure, but with profit. Robert had always thought in his heart that this story of Sir Matthew Hale smacked strongly of superstition; but when he came to reflect that if the Bible is true, of which he had no doubt, the God who speaks to us now is the same who spoke to Moses, and who actually prospered or hindered the children of Israel according to their observance of the Sabbath, he changed his opinion so far as this--he resolved for the present to adopt the advice of that great man, and then to watch whether the same results were verified in his own case. And although his reflections upon this point partook of the merely philosophic character that, to some extent, marked the operations of his mind, the course upon which he resolved had several good effects; it made him realize more sensibly his practical relation to God, and caused him to watch more closely the consequences resulting from the discharge or neglect not only of this particular duty, but of duty in the general. That resolution, apparently so trifling, and expressed to no one, started him on a perfectly new track, and enabled him to learn, from his own experience, that "*whoever will watch the providence of God, will never lack a providence to watch.*"

On Monday the weather was worse than before. They did indeed go out, well protected by thick boots, watercoats, and tarpaulin hats, to see after their boats; but the day was so chilly, as well as wet, that their most comfortable place was near the fire. Before sunset, however, the rain ceased, the clouds rapidly dispersed, and when the sun flung his last slanting beams across the earth, Robert pointed to Harold a red spot upon a cloud, which spread so fast, that soon the whole western sky was blazing with the promise of a fair morrow. With this expectation they made every preparation, and went to bed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

VOYAGE BOUND THE ISLAND--THE LOST BOAT--STRANGE SIGNALS AGAIN--HURRICANE--NIGHT MARCH--HELPLESS VESSEL--MELANCHOLY FATE--THE RESCUE--MAROONERS' HOSPITALITY--CONCLUSION

Tuesday morning dawned without a cloud. Before the stars had ceased shining all hands were called to work, and by the time the sun peeped over the eastern marsh, they pushed off from their landing, Harold and Sam, with Mum, being in one boat, and Robert, Mary, and Frank, with Fidelle, in the other. Rowing slowly down the river, against a light wind from the south-east, the perfume of yellow jessamines (gelseminum sempervirens), then in rich bloom, so loaded the air, that the young people snuffed up the delicious odours, and looked lovingly at the green island they were preparing to forsake.

The voyage was made almost without incident. When they had passed out to sea, the voyagers were rejoiced to find their boats behaving as well upon the rough water as they had already done upon the smooth--they danced joyously upon the gentle swell, as if congratulating their young builders in the happy prospect of a successful voyage. The boys tried the effect of lashing them together, and thus verified the expectation of their safety; they rubbed and creaked a good deal, and moved less rapidly than when separate, but they sat upon the water with a steadiness which no ordinary commotion could disturb.

Running the sea length of the island, and now bending their course for the north river, Sam sang out, "A sail!" Far up the coast a faint white speck appeared, glancing in the sunbeams, but it soon faded from sight, and they concluded that either it was a distant sea gull, or else a vessel passing to the north. They watched it with interest so long as it was visible, and then turned into the river. Had they suspected what that white thing was, and that instead of disappearing in the increasing distance, it was only obscured by a little mist, as it approached, beating against a head wind, they would have forsaken river, island, tent, everything, and sailed joyfully to meet it.

They reached the old encampment at one o'clock, having made the run of twenty-six miles in six and a half hours. The boats behaved so well, and the winds, sea, and sky were so inviting, that their only regret was, that they had not put everything aboard and made a day's voyage homewards. But doubtless, as Harold remarked, a kind Providence watched over their path, and would prove its kindness even in this delay.

Having taken a hasty survey of their old place of rest and of refuge, and refreshed themselves at the spring, they resolved to divide their company--Robert's boat to go direct to the orange landing, where it was to be left, while the passengers went by land to the tent, and prepared the provisions for next day; and Harold and Sam, in the meantime, to continue up the river, and ascertain whether there was not an inland passage round the island, shorter and easier than the route by sea. With this understanding they sailed together to Duck Point, where Robert turned into the Creek, and putting Mary at the helm, rowed until they came to the orange landing, and there moored the boat beside the old raft. They reached the

tent long before sunset, and having completed the necessary preparations about dark, began to wish for the return of the others. Several times Robert went to the landing to look for them before the daylight had entirely ceased; and after dark he went again by the light of the moon, which, being half full, shed her light at this time of the evening perpendicularly upon his path. He was becoming uneasy, when afar off he heard the mellow sounds of a boat song; the notes grew more and more distinct; the thump of the oars began to be heard keeping time to the music; finally, the song ceased; a clatter was heard as the oars were laid in the boat; and soon the whole company were together once more, enjoying the last supper of which they expected to partake on the island.

"What kept you so long?" inquired Robert. "Was the distance great?"

"No," replied Harold, with a look of pleasure; "we found the distance only about six miles, but we were detained by missing our way, and more especially by trying to be sure of a piece of very good news. I think we have found the old boat."

"Indeed!" said Robert, starting to his feet, with the keenness of his delight. "Where? How?"

"In the marsh, at the far bend of the river. I always thought it had lodged somewhere in that direction, and therefore kept my eyes open at every little creek and opening in the marsh. At last I saw, what I cannot say positively is *our* boat, but it is a boat of the same colour, and having a stripe of white and black, like ours. We tried until sunset to approach it, but did not succeed in getting any nearer than at first; it is surrounded with soft mud, and a wilderness of mangroves."

This was certainly pleasant, though unprofitable, intelligence. There was no prospect of their being able to extricate the boat, except by the help of some uncommon tide; and its value, though considerable, was nothing in comparison with the necessity for returning home. They resolved not to wait for it; on the contrary, that they would transport to the portage, by means of Harold's boat, the lading intended for Robert's; then returning to the prairie, they would take in the second load, and passing around by the new way, unite at Duck Point, and sail thence for home. By rising early they were sure that they could leave the island by eleven or twelve o'clock.

While engaged in these plans for the morrow, Sam came in to say that he was afraid the next day also would see them on the island, for never in his life had he seen clouds gather so rapidly, or fly so fast. The little company went out, and saw a multitude of low scudding clouds passing with intense rapidity over the face of the moon. Suddenly each one started, and looked inquisitively into the others' faces, for at that moment the sound of a cannon, within five miles, came booming from the coast. Robert and Mary turned red and pale by turns. Frank clapped his hands, exclaiming, "It is father! O, I know it is father!" Harold folded

his arms--he had evidently acquired something of the composure of the Indian.

"Quick! quick! let us answer it!" cried Robert, and with the word darted away to the tree where the cannon powder was kept. While he was gone there came another report. They loaded expeditiously, and in a moment afterwards the dark woods were illuminated with the flash, and the earth shaken with the thundering discharge.

"Now for a march to double quick time!" said Robert, his strong excitement making him the leader of all that was done. "But, sister, what shall we do with you and Frank? You cannot keep pace with us. You had better stay here with Sam, while Harold and I push on to the coast, and see who is there."

"Had we not better fire our cannon once more!" suggested Harold.

"Sam can do it," Robert answered. "Here, Sam, put in so much," showing him the quantity, "and fire it until you are sure they hear you. But what is that?" he continued, listening to a loud roar that came from the coast, and increased like the accumulating rush of waters.

"It is a hurricane," replied Harold. "There is no use in trying to go now. Down with the tent pins! deep! deep! or we shall have our house blown from above us."

They hastened all to do what could be done for their immediate protection; but there was little to be done. Gaining wisdom from their former experience, they had driven down the pins as far as they could go when the tent was pitched, and moreover had raised the floor and trenched the premises. They could only make the upper canvas a little more secure, and having done this, they entered the tent a few seconds before the storm burst upon them. It was a terrible repetition of what they had experienced four months before, when Sam was so nearly destroyed.

Mary and Frank were in deep distress. The earnest impetuosity of Robert, combined with their own thoughts, had left in their minds no doubt that the guns fired were from their father; and now, O what a storm to meet him on his coming a second time to their truly enchanted island! Frank cried as if his heart would break. Mary buried her face in her hands, and prayed to Him who is mighty to deliver, even when the winds and the waves overwhelm.

Harold also was strongly convinced that the guns were from his uncle, but he knew that this was only conjectural, and therefore he kindly remarked in the hearing of the others.

"You have no *certain* reason, Robert, to believe that those guns are from your father. But suppose that they are, then another thing is true, he is in a vessel, for boats do not usually carry guns. They were fired too before the storm came on; therefore they are not signals of distress, and also they appear to have come from the river. Now, if the person who fired them is in a vessel, and in the river, what is there to fear? He cannot get away tonight, and he cannot probably be hurt by

the storm. Let us be quiet until morning, and then go out to see who it is."

These thoughts were very comforting. Mary and Frank ceased their weeping, and united in the conversation. They all huddled together in the middle of the tent. For hours the wind roared and howled with great fury, but their tent was protected by the grand wall of forest trees around, and also by the picket enclosure; and though the wind made the canvas flutter, it could neither crush it down nor lift it from above them. Nor did the rain which poured in torrents, and was driven with great violence across the prairie, give them any particular inconvenience; it was readily shed by the several thicknesses of canvas overhead, and carried off by the drainage round the tent.

In the course of an hour, Mary and Frank fell asleep upon the sofa, and the others took such naps as they could obtain, while sitting in their chairs, and listening to a roar of winds so loud, that if twenty cannons had been fired at the river they could scarcely have been heard.

About midnight the rain ceased, and the wind began sensibly to abate. Puff after puff, and roar after roar, still succeeded each other through the forest; but the fury of the storm was over. An hour before day, Harold shook Robert by the shoulder, and said, "I think we can start now. Come and see."

The sky and woods were pitchy dark, little pools of water covered the ground, and the prairie was rough with huge branches torn from the trees, and conveyed to a distance. These were obstacles and inconveniences, but not impediments; and as the wind had so far lulled that it was possible for a torch to live, Robert decided to make a trial. He waked Mary and Sam, and announcing his intention, said to them:

"We wish to reach the old encampment by the time there is light enough to see over the river. If possible, we will return by eight o'clock, and let you know all. If we are absent longer than that, you may conclude that we have found something to do; and in that case, you had better follow us. We shall, of course, be somewhere on the river; but as we ourselves do not know where, you had better go direct to Duck Point, from which you can see almost all the way to our old spring. Let me have a piece of white cloth, sister; I will, if necessary, set up a signal for you on the beach, to tell you where we are."

Mary was exceedingly unwilling to have them depart. The darkness looked horrible; their blind path must now be still more obscured by prostrate trees and fallen branches; and if they succeeded in reaching the intended place, they might be called to engage in she knew not what dangerous enterprise upon water as boisterous as the sea. Quelling her anxieties, however, in view of the necessities of the case, she said:

"Go, but do take care of yourselves. Remember that you two are the only protectors, except Sam, for Frank and me."

The boys promised to run no unnecessary risks, and to return if possible by the appointed hour. Taking their guns, the spy-glass, and a bundle of rich splints of lightwood, they set out. Mary watched their figures gradually diminishing under the illuminated arches of the forest. She noticed the dark shadows of the trees turning upon their bases as pivots, when the torch passed, until they all pointed towards the tent. Then the light began to be intercepted; it was seen by fitful glares; it ceased to be seen at all; its course was marked only by a faint reflection from the tree-tops, or from the misty air; finally every trace of the torch and of its reflection was lost to sight, and Mary returned, with a sigh and a prayer, to her seat upon the sofa.

The boys were compelled to watch very carefully the blazing upon the trees, and what few signs of their path remained. There were no stars to guide their course, and the marks upon the earth were so perfectly obliterated by the storm, that several times they missed their way for a few steps, and recovered it with the utmost difficulty. It is scarcely possible for the best woodsman in the world, of a dark night, and after a storm, to keep a course, or to regain it after it is lost. The boys were extremely fortunate in being able to reach the river by the break of day.

Nothing yet was visible. The river and marsh looked like a dark abyss, from which rolled hoarse and angry murmurs. They gathered some wet fragments of pine left by them near the oak, and made a fire, beside which they sat and talked. Was there any person in the river! Surely it was time to hear some voice or gun, or to see some answering light. They would have hallooed, but there was something oppressive and ominous in the gloom of that storm-beaten solitude; and, for aught they knew, their call might come only to the wet ears of the drowned and the dead. They waited in painful and reverential silence.

Gradually the dark rolling water became visible; then afar off appeared black, solitary things, that proved to be the tops of mangroves, higher than the rest, around which had gathered moss and dead twigs of the marsh. When the light of day more fully developed the scene, they descried, at the distance of two miles, an object which the glass revealed to be a small vessel, of the pilot boat class, dismantled, and on her beam ends. This sight filled them with apprehension.

There was no person visible on the side or yards; was there any one living within? The companion-way was closed. Possibly a gun might cause the persons on board to give some sign of life.

The boys made ready to shoot, but neither gun could be discharged. The powder was wet. The only leak in the tent the night before had been directly over the guns, and the rain had dripped into the barrels. It was vain to attempt cleansing them for use; and if they succeeded in producing a discharge, how could that help the persons on board?

"No, no," said Robert, "what they want is our boat. Let us get that, and go immediately to their rescue."

Before leaving the bluff they planted conspicuously a small pole, in the cleft top of which Robert slipped a piece of paper, on which was written, "We have gone for our boat; you will see us as we pass. Robert."

When they arrived at the orange landing the boat was floating so far from shore, that without swimming it could scarcely be reached. The raft, however, to which it was moored, was nearer the bank, and Harold managed, by climbing a slender sapling near the water's edge, and throwing his weight upon the proper side, to bend it so that he could drop upon the raft, and from that to enter the boat. It was ankle deep with water, and there was no gourd nor even a paddle with which to bale it. Robert's ingenuity devised a plan; he threw into the boat an armful of moss, which soaked up the water like a sponge, and lifting this over the gunwale, he squeezed it into the river.

After a short delay they pushed from shore. To their delight, the tide was so high that they could row over the marsh in a straight line for the river, which was hardly a mile distant. On their way the sun burst through a cloud, and appeared so high as to prove that the hour of eight was already passed, and that Mary's company was probably on their way to the point before them. The water in the river was dark and rough, from the action of the neighbouring sea, but undisturbed by wind. On reaching it they paused, and hallooed to know whether the party by land had reached the point; hearing no answer, they resumed their oars, and crossed to the other side of the river, where the water was more smooth.

We will now leave them for awhile, and return to the company at the tent. Mary reclined on the sofa, but could not sleep. The idea of her father in danger, perhaps lost in his effort to rescue them, and thoughts of the perilous night-march of the boys through a dense forest, and then the nameless adventures into which her daring cousin and excited brother might be tempted, haunted her mind until the grey light of morning stole through the white canvas, and admonished her to rise. Frank was fast asleep upon the sofa, covered with a cloak; and Sam's snores sounded long and loud from his shed-room. On looking at the watch, which Harold had left for her convenience, she found that it was nearly seven o'clock; she did not know that when the sky is densely covered by clouds, the dawn does not appear until the sun has nearly reached the horizon.

It was not long after this before a fire was made, and breakfast ready for the explorers. Mary employed herself in every useful way she could devise, until the slow minute hand measured the hour of eight; then taking a hasty meal, they set out upon their march. Sam led the van with a gun upon his shoulder, and a gourd of water in his hand. Mary followed, carrying a basket of provision for the hungry boys, and Frank went from one to the other, at will, or lagged behind to

watch the motions of the dogs, that looked thoughtful, as if aware that something unusual was on hand.

The ground was still quite wet, and they were compelled to pick their way around little pools and puddles that lay in their path; but with care they succeeded so well that they would have reached Duck Point in advance of the boys, had it not been for a circumstance that interested them much, while it filled them with gloom.

Nearing the point, the dogs, that had hitherto followed very demurely behind, pricked up their ears, and trotted briskly towards the water's side. Sam noticed this, and remarked, "Dey after tukkey I 'speck, but we a'n't got no time fo' tukkey now." Soon after, their attention was arrested by hearing a cry from the dogs, which was neither a bark nor a whine, but a note of distress made up of both.

"Eh! eh!" said Sam. "Wat dem dog after now? Dah no cry for deer, nor for tukkey, nor for squirrel. Missus, you and Mas Frank stay here one minute, till I go see w'at dem dog about. I sho' dey got some'n strange. Only harkee how dey talk!"

Sam was in fact fearful that some sad accident had befallen Robert and Harold, and that the dogs, having scented them by the light wind coming down the river, had given utterance to this moan of distress. He therefore walked with hurried steps in the direction from which the sound proceeded, while Mary and Frank, unwilling to be left alone, followed slowly behind him. He had not gained more than twenty paces the advance, when they saw him stop--run a few steps forward--then stop again, and lift up his hands with an exclamation of surprise. They hurried to his side, and found him gazing, with looks of horror, into a little strip of bushes that skirted the margin of the tide water.

"What is the matter, Sam?" inquired Mary.

"Look, Missus," he replied, pointing with his finger. "Enty[#] dat some people drown dey in de ma'sh?"

[#] Is not that.

Mary and Frank looked, and saw what appeared to be in truth, the bodies of two persons fast locked in each other's arms, and lodged upon the top of a submerged mallow, which allowed them to sway back and forth with the undulations of the water. Sam was hesitating what to do--for negroes are almost universally superstitious about dead people. Mary urged him on.

"You will not leave them there, will you?" she inquired; "you will surely

draw them out, and see who they are. May be, too, they are not dead. O, get them out, Sam, get them at once."

Shamed out of his superstitious fear, Sam reluctantly obeyed the injunction of his mistress. He waded carefully and timidly along, until he could lay hold of the bodies, and drag them to shore.

"W'ite man and nigger, Missus," he said, solemnly, as the movement through the water revealed the pale features of the one, and the woolly head of the other. "De w'ite man, I dun-know[#] who he is, he look like sailor; and de nigger--" He had now drawn them ashore, and examined their features. It would have made any one's heart sad to hear the groan that came from the poor fellow, when he had looked steadily into the face of the dead man. He staggered, fell on his knees in the water, embraced the wet body, and kissed it.

[#] Dun-know, don't know.

"O my Missus," he cried, "it is Peter! my own brudder Peter! De only brudder I got in dis wide wull. O Peter--Peter!" and he wept like a child.

"Draw them out, Sam," said Mary, energetically; "draw them on high ground, and let us rub them as we rubbed you. There may be life in them yet."

"No, Missus," he replied, pulling the bodies higher ashore. "No life here. He cold--he stiff--he dead. O Peter, my brudder, I glad to meet you once mo'. Huddee[#] Peter! Huddee boy!" The poor fellow actually shook hands with the corpse, and poured out afresh his unaffected sorrows.

[#] Howdye.

As soon as the bodies were drawn sufficiently from the water, Mary proceeded to examine them. The face of the white man was unknown to her, he appeared to have been a respectable sailor. He and Peter were evidently stiff dead. She was so certain they were beyond all hope of recovery, that she did not even require their clothes to be unloosed, or any means to be used for their restoration. She waited on the mourning brother until the first burst of his grief was over, then she and Frank aided him to make a sort of brush wood fence around the bodies, to protect them until something could be done for their interment.

It was while they were engaged in this last duty that Robert and Harold passed the point. Their halloo might, under ordinary circumstances, have been

heard; but with their own occupation of mind, the rustle of bushes dragged along, and the roar of the distant surf, the voices of the boatmen sounded in vain.

From the point the boys proceeded, it was said, to the other side of the river, to escape the waves that dashed heavily against the island. The whole marsh, from bluff to bluff, was one flood of water, with the exception of patches of the more luxuriant herbage that peered above the rolling surface. The mangroves, though generally immersed, broke so completely the violence of the waves, that the water above and around them, was comparatively smooth, while in the channel of the river it was too rough for safety.

Picking their way over the tops of the low bushes, and around the branching summits of the taller, the boys rowed steadily towards the unfortunate vessel. They had gone not quite half a mile from shore, when they heard a gun, and looking back, they saw Mary's company beckoning to them. It was too late to return, without great sacrifice of time; and Robert pointed with one hand to the distant vessel, and with the other to the place of the old encampment. These signs were understood; the company on shore, after looking steadily at the distant object on the water, disappeared in the woods, and afterwards re-appeared above the old spring.

The labour of rowing increased as the boat proceeded. The passage through the marsh became more intricate, and the swell from sea began to be more sensibly felt through the irregular openings. But with the increase of difficulties came also an increase of energy, as they approached the vessel. They were now about a quarter of a mile distant. Their hands were sore, and their limbs weary with rowing. They tried not to exert themselves any more vigorously than before, lest they should utterly exhaust their strength, but they nevertheless observed, that as they neared the vessel, their boat did somehow move more rapidly through the water, and crowd with greater skill through the narrow opening.

As the young boatmen came within hail they would have called, had they not been restrained by the same ominous feeling which they experienced on the beach. With beating hearts they rowed silently around the bow of the vessel. The waves dashed heavily against it, and came up the inclined deck, oftentimes higher than the companion-way. They moored the boat to the broken mast, and then clambering along the pile of sea-weed and mangroves, which the vessel had collected in drifting, came at last to the cabin door. Robert could not say one word; his heart had risen into his mouth, and he felt almost ready to faint.

"Hallo!" cried Harold, his own voice husky with emotion. "Is anybody within?"

"Thank God!" responded a voice near the cabin door. It was a female voice, and its familiar tones thrilled to Harold's very soul. "Yes, yes, there are three of us here. Who is that calling?"

"Harold," he answered, "Harold Mc----." The name was not finished. He reeled as he spoke, and leaned pale as a sheet against the companion-way. That voice was not to be mistaken, little as he expected to hear it on that dark river. It was the voice first known to him, and first loved of all earthly voices. He tried again to answer; it was in vain. He groaned in very anguish of joy, and the big tears rolled down his face. Robert answered for him.

"Harold McIntosh and Robert Gordon. Who is in here?"

The voice from within did not reply. It seemed as if the person to whom it belonged was also overcome by emotion; for soon after they heard her speak tremulously,

"Brother! Sister! Thank God--our boys--are here!"

Robert did not recognize the voice of his aunt, nor did he understand the speechless look which his cousin turned upon him, until after two or three violent sobs, Harold replied to his inquiring look, "My mother! Robert, mother!"

Hearing the exclamation from within, Robert had now recovered from his own torture of suspense, and leaned down to the cabin-door in time to hear the manly voice of Dr. Gordon, asking in tones that showed he too was struggling to command himself,

"My children, are you all well?"

"Yes, father, all well," Robert replied. He wished to ask also, "Is mother here?" but his voice again failed; he fell upon the leaning door, and gave vent to a passionate flood of tears. While leaning there he heard his aunt call out, "Come, help me, brother. She has fainted." But that answer was enough; his mother was there.

The boys tried in vain to open the door; it was secured on the inside, and it was not until after some delay that Dr. Gordon removed not only the bolt, but various appliances that he had used to keep the water from dripping into his sister's berth, and gave each a hearty shake of the hand as they leaned sideways to enter the door, and clambered in the dark cabin. Dark, however, as that cabin was, and insecure as was the footing of the boys, it was not long before each was locked in his mother's arms.

Mrs. Gordon was very feeble, and her face much emaciated with suffering. She said little more at first than to ask after Mary and Frank. This silence alarmed Robert; he knew that joy is usually loquacious, and he heard his aunt talking very earnestly with Harold; but he forgot that his mother was just recovering from a swoon, and that extreme joy expresses itself differently in different persons. His father, seeing him look anxiously into her pale, thin face, remarked, "She will recover fast enough, now. The only medicine she needed was to meet you all."

"O, yes," she too observed. "Give me now my dear Mary and Frank, and I think I shall soon get well."

"We can give them to you in an hour, if you are able to bear removal," said Robert. "Is she able, father?"

"Yes, yes, able enough," his father answered. "And, I presume, we had better go, before the tide recedes, or we may be caught in the marsh. Come, let us load without delay."

They removed the trunks, and other things needful, to the boat; the boys relating all the while to their delighted parents what a beautiful prairie home they had, and how well it was stocked with every comfort. "Everything," said Robert, "except father and mother; and now we are taking them there."

The boat was brought close to the vessel's side, and held there firmly by Dr. Gordon, while the ladies were assisted by the boys. And with what pride those mothers leaned upon those brave and manly sons--grown far more manly since their exile--may be imagined, but can not be described. Mrs. Gordon recovered her vivacity, and a great portion of her strength, before she left the cabin. Joy had inspired her heart, and energized her muscles. Mrs. McIntosh also seemed to grow happier every moment, as she discovered the mental and moral developments of her son. Dr. Gordon, having carefully closed the companion-way, took the helm, and the boys the oars, while the mothers, with their faces towards the bow, looked with eyes of love and admiration upon the young labourers, who were requiting life for life, and love for love, what had been bestowed on them in their infancy.

As they were passing through the marsh, Mrs. Gordon spied several human figures on a distant bluff. They were exceedingly small, but distinctly marked against the sky.

"Can they be my dear little Mary and Frank?" she asked.

The boys replied that they were, and she waved her white handkerchief to them, in the hope of attracting their attention.

The water was still so rough in the channel, that, anxious as the parents were to embrace their long-lost children, Dr. Gordon decided that instead of attempting the passage directly across, in their heavily loaded skiff, they must continue up the river, through the irregular openings of the marsh.

They came at last near enough to be discovered by Mary and Frank, who, seeing the boat load of passengers going up the river, needed no invitation to meet them at Duck Point. The two companies reached the beach about the same time. Frank rushed right through the water, and sprang into his mother's lap; Mary was lifted into the boat by Robert, who waded back and forth to bring her; and Sam, though he was saddened by the melancholy fate of his brother, came with open lips and shining teeth, to shake hands with Mossa and Missus, as soon as the children gave him an opportunity.

Here they stopped long enough to allow the hungry boys to refresh themselves from Mary's basket of provisions, and Sam's gourd of water. They were

almost ravenous. Dr. Gordon then went with Robert overland, to bring the other boat from the prairie to the portage, while Harold and Sam conducted the company by water to the orange landing. From this latter place Mrs. McIntosh preferred to walk alone with her son to the tent, leaving the others to descend the river.

During this part of the voyage, Dr. Gordon first learnt with certainty the fate of Peter and the sailor. As soon therefore as Mrs. Gordon had landed, he left Robert to support her to the tent, and re-entering the boat with Sam, went to rescue the bodies from their exposure, and to prepare them for a decent burial. It was late in the afternoon when they returned; and, as the best they could do with the dead bodies, they left them all night in the boat, covered with a sail, and pushed a little distance from the land.

The young housekeepers laid themselves out to entertain their welcome guests. Mary provided them with an early and delightful supper, which was highly seasoned with love and good will. Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. McIntosh reclined on Mary's sofa, the others gathered round to complete the circle, and the young people gave snatches of their eventful history. It was late before any one thought of retiring. Then Dr. Gordon called for a copy of the Scriptures. He talked of their separation, their sorrows, dangers, escapes, and now of their joyful reunion. After that, he read the ninety-first Psalm, which speaks of the protection that God promises to His people, and kneeling down, he offered their united thanksgiving for all the past, and their united prayer that the Lord would be their God, and make them His loving, grateful people. When they arose from their knees, every eye was wet with the tears of gratitude and joy.

The sleeping arrangements for the night were hasty and scant. Mary lay between her mother and aunt, for whom two of the narrow mattresses of the vessel had been placed side by side, and covered with the bear-skin. Frank nestled into the bosom of his father, and close beside him on another mattress lay Robert. Harold had chosen the sofa. After the labours and disturbances of the past twenty-four hours, sleep came without invitation. The moon and stars shone brilliantly overhead, the air was uncommonly pure, as if washed clean by the preceding rain, and the leafy forest, which had so often enclosed in its bosom the young but hopeful exiles, now murmured all night its soft blessings upon a reunited family.

* * * * *

Having extended this history far beyond the limits originally intended, it is time to close with a few hurried words.

Poor Peter was buried the next night by torchlight, according to the romantic custom prevalent among the negroes. Locked indissolubly in each other's arms,

he and the sailor were laid in the same grave, and a double head and foot-board was sunk to mark the spot.

After much labour, and many dangers and delays (to recount which would require almost another volume), they raised and launched their little vessel, recovered the sail boat, provided suitably for their brute pets, sailed from the Island of Refuge and arrived safely at Bellevue, where they had been long expected, and almost given up for lost.

Before they left, the health of Mrs. Gordon was rapidly and almost perfectly restored. Fed from her children's stores, drinking from their tupelo spring, and regaled in every sense by the varied productions of that land of enchantment, but more especially charmed by her children's love there was nothing more for her to desire, except the presence of the dear ones left behind.

The joy of beginning their return to Bellevue was, however, strangely dashed with sorrow, at parting from scenes tenderly endeared by a thousand associations. As they passed down the river, a gentle gale came from the woods, loaded with the perfume of flowers. Harold pointed to his mother the tall magnolia on the river bank, which had been to him a Bethel (Gen. xviii. 16-19); it was now in bloom, and two magnificent flowers, almost a foot in diameter, set like a pair of brilliant eyes near the top, looked kindly upon him, and seemed to watch him until he had passed out of sight. The live oak, under whose immense shade their tent had been first pitched, was the last tree they passed; a nonpareil, hidden in the branches, sat whistling plaintively to its mate; a mocking bird was on the topmost bough, singing with all its might a song of endless variety; and underneath a herd of shy, peeping deer had collected, and looked inquisitively at the objects moving upon the water. It seemed to the young people as if the whole island had centred itself upon that bluff, to reproach them with ingratitude, and protest against their departure. But their resolution could not now be changed; the prow of their vessel held on its way. *The Marooning Party was Over.*

THE END

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE YOUNG MAROONERS ON THE FLORIDA COAST ***

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